

# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

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## The Adventures of Harry Richmond.

### CHAPTER I.

#### I AM A SUBJECT OF CONTENTION.



ONE midnight of a winter month the sleepers in Riversley Grange were awakened by a ringing of the outer bell and blows upon the great hall-doors. Squire Beltham was master there: the other members of the household were, his daughter, Dorothy Beltham; a married daughter, Mrs. Richmond; Benjamin Sewis, an old half-caste butler; various domestic servants; and a little boy, christened Harry Lepel Richmond, the squire's grandson. Riversley Grange lay in a rich watered hollow of the Hampshire heath-country; a lonely circle of enclosed brook and pasture, within view of some of its dependent farms, but out of hail of them, or any dwelling except the cottage. Traditions of audacious stables and the head-gardener's highwaymen, together with the gloomy surrounding fir-scenery, kept it alive to fears of solitude and the night; and there was that in the determined violence of the knocks and repeated bell-peals which assured all those who had ever listened in the servants' hall to prognostications of a possible night attack, that the robbers had come at last most

awfully. A crowd of maids gathered along the upper corridor of the main body of the building : two or three footmen hung lower down, bold in attitude. Suddenly the noise ended, and soon after the voice of old Sewis commanded them to scatter away to their beds ; whereupon the footmen took agile leaps to the post of danger, while the women, in whose bosoms intense curiosity now supplanted terror, proceeded to a vacant room overlooking the front entrance, and spied from the window.

Meanwhile Sewis stood by his master's bedside. The squire was a hunter of the old sort : a hard rider, deep drinker, and heavy slumberer. Before venturing to shake his arm Sewis struck a light and flashed it over the squire's eyelids to make the task of rousing him easier. At the first touch the squire sprang up, swearing by his Lord Harry he had just dreamed of fire, and muttering of buckets.

"Sewis ! you're the man, are you : where has it broken out ? "

"No, sir ; no fire," said Sewis ; "you be cool, sir."

"Cool, sir ! confound it, Sewis, haven't I heard a whole town of steeples at work ? I don't sleep so thick but I can hear, you dog ! Fellow comes here, gives me a start, tells me to be cool ; what the deuce ! nobody hurt, then ? all right ! "

The squire had fallen back on his pillow and was relapsing to sleep.

Sewis spoke impressively : "There's a gentleman downstairs ; a gentleman downstairs, sir. He has come rather late."

"Gentleman downstairs come rather late." The squire recapitulated the intelligence to possess it thoroughly. "Rather late, eh ? Oh ! Shove him into a bed, and give him hot brandy and water, and be hanged to him ! "

Sewis had the office of tempering a severely distasteful announcement to the squire.

He resumed : "The gentleman doesn't talk of staying. That is not his business. It's rather late for him to arrive."

"Rather late ! " roared the squire. "Why, what's it o'clock ? "

Reaching a hand to the watch over his head, he caught sight of the unearthly hour. "A quarter to two ? Gentleman downstairs ? Can't be that infernal apothecary who broke 's engagement to dine with me last night ? By George, if it is I'll souse him ; I'll drench him from head to heel as though the rascal 'd been drawn through the duck-pond. Two o'clock in the morning ? Why, the man's drunk. Tell him I'm a magistrate, and I'll commit him, deuce take him ; give him fourteen days for a sot ; another fourteen for impudence. I've given a month 'fore now. Comes to me, a justice of the peace !—man's mad ! Tell him he's in peril of a lunatic asylum. And doesn't talk of staying ? Lift him out o' the house on the top o' your boot, Sewis, and say it's mine ; you've my leave."

Sewis withdrew a step from the bedside. At a safe distance he fronted his master steadily ; almost admonishingly. "It's Mr. Richmond, sir," he said.

"Mr. . . ." The squire checked his breath. That was a name

never uttered at the Grange. "The scoundrel?" he inquired harshly, half in the tone of one assuring himself, and his rigid dropped jaw shut.

The fact had to be denied or affirmed instantly, and Sewis was silent.

Grasping his bedclothes in a lump, the squire cried: "Downstairs? downstairs, Sewis? You've admitted him into my house!"

"No, sir."

"You have!"

"He is not in the house, sir."

"You have! How did you speak to him, then?"

"Out of my window, sir."

"What place here is the scoundrel soiling now?"

"He is on the doorstep outside the house."

"Outside, is he? and the door's locked?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let him rot there!"

By this time the midnight visitor's patience had become exhausted. A renewal of his clamour for immediate attention fell on the squire's ear, amazing him to stupefaction at such challenging insolence.

"Hand me my breeches," he called to Sewis; "I can't think brisk out of my breeches."

Sewis held the garment ready. The squire jumped from the bed, fuming speechlessly, chafing at gaiters and braces, cravat and coat, and allowed his buttons to be fitted neatly on his calves; the hammering at the hall-door and plucking at the bell going on without intermission. He wore the aspect of one who assumes a forced composure under the infliction of outrages on his character in a court of law, where he must of necessity listen and lock his boiling replies within his indignant bosom.

"Now, Sewis, now my horsewhip," he remarked, as if it had been a simple adjunct of his equipment.

"Your hat, sir?"

"My horsewhip, I said."

"Your hat is in the hall," Sewis observed gravely.

"I asked you for my horsewhip."

"That is not to be found anywhere," said Sewis.

The squire was diverted from his objurgations against this piece of servitorial defiance by his daughter Dorothy's timid appeal for permission to come in. Sewis left the room. Presently the squire descended, fully clad, and breathing sharply from his nostrils. Servants were warned off out of hearing; none but Sewis stood by.

The squire himself unbolted the door, and threw it open to the limit of the chain.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

A response followed promptly from outside: "I take you to be Mr. Harry Lepel Beltham. Correct me if I err. Accept my apologies for disturbing you at a late hour of the night, I pray."

"Your name?"

"Is plain Augustus Fitz-George Roy Richmond at this moment, Mr. Beltham. You will recognize me better by opening your door entirely: voices are deceptive. You were born a gentleman, Mr. Beltham, and will not reduce me to request you to behave like one. I am now in the position, as it were, of addressing a badger in his den. It is on both sides unsatisfactory. It reflects egregious discredit upon you, the householder."

The squire hastily bade Sewis see that the passages to the sleeping apartments were barred, and flung the great chain loose. He was acting under strong control of his temper.

It was a quiet grey night, and as the doors flew open, a largely-built man, dressed in a high-collared great-coat and fashionable hat of the time, stood clearly defined to view. He carried a light cane, with the point of its silver handle against his under lip. There was nothing formidable in his appearance, and his manner was affectedly affable. He lifted his hat as soon as he found himself face to face with the squire, disclosing a partially bald head, though his whiskering was luxuriant, and a robust condition of manhood was indicated by his erect attitude and the immense swell of his furred great-coat at the chest. His features were exceedingly frank and cheerful. From his superior height, he was enabled to look down quite royally on the man whose repose he had disturbed.

The following conversation passed between them.

"You now behold who it is, Mr. Beltham, that acknowledges to the misfortune of arousing you at an unseemly hour—unbetimes, as our gossips in mother Saxon might say—and with profound regret, sir, though my habit is to take it lightly."

"Have you any accomplices lurking about here?"

"I am alone."

"What's your business?"

"I have no business."

"You have no business to be here, no. I ask you what's the object of your visit?"

"Permit me first to speak of the cause of my protracted arrival, sir. The ridicule of casting it on the post-boys will strike you, Mr. Beltham, as it does me. Nevertheless, I must do it; I have no resource. Owing to a rascal of the genus, incontinent in liquor, I have this night walked seven miles from Ewling. My complaint against him is not on my own account."

"What brought you here at all?"

"Can you ask me?"

"I ask you what brought you to my house at all?"

"True, I might have slept at Ewling."

"Why didn't you?"

"For the reason, Mr. Beltham, which brought me here originally. I could not wait—not a single minute. So far advanced to the neighbourhood, I would not be retarded, and I came on. I crave your excuses for

the hour of my arrival. The grounds for my coming at all you will very well understand, and you will applaud me when I declare to you that I come to her penitent; to exculpate myself, certainly, but despising self-justification. I love my wife, Mr. Beltham. Yes; hear me out, sir. I can point to my unhappy star, and say, blame that more than me. That star of my birth and most disastrous fortunes should plead on my behalf to you; to my wife at least it will."

" You've come to see my daughter Marian, have you ? "

" My wife, sir."

" You don't cross my threshold while I live."

" You compel her to come out to me ? "

" She stays where she is, poor wretch, till the grave takes her. You've done your worst; be off."

" Mr. Beltham, I am not to be restrained from the sight of my wife."

" Scamp ! "

" By no scurrilous epithets from a man I am bound to respect will I be deterred or exasperated."

" Damned scamp, I say ! " The squire having exploded his wrath gave it free way. " I've stopped my tongue all this while before a scoundrel 'd corkscrew the best-bottled temper right or left, go where you will one end o' the world to the other, by God ! And here's a scoundrel stinks of villainy, and I've proclaimed him 'ware my gates as a common trespasser, and deserves hanging if ever rook did nailed hard and fast to my barn doors ! comes here for my daughter, when he got her by stealing her, scenting his carcase, and talking 'bout his birth, singing what not sort o' foreign mewin' stuff, and she found him out a liar and a beast, by God ! And she turned home. My doors are open to my flesh and blood. And here she halts, I say, 'gainst the law, if the law's against me. She's crazed: you've made her mad; she knows none of us, not even her boy. Be off; you've done your worst; the light's gone clean out in her; and hear me, you Richmond, or Roy, or whatever you call yourself, I tell you I thank the Lord she has lost her senses. See her or not, you've no hold on her, and see her you shan't while I go by the name of a man."

Mr. Richmond succeeded in preserving an air of serious deliberation under the torrent of this tremendous outburst, which was marked by scarce a pause in the delivery.

He said, " My wife deranged ! I might presume it too truly an inherited disease. Do you trifle with me, sir ? Her reason unseated ! and can you pretend to the right of dividing us ? If this be as you say—Oh ! ten thousand times stronger my claim, my absolute claim, to cherish her. Make way for me, Mr. Beltham. I solicit humbly the holiest privilege sorrow can crave of humanity. My wife ! my wife ! Make way for me, sir."

His figure was bent to advance. The squire shouted an order to Sewis to run round to the stables and slip the dogs loose.

" Is it your final decision ? " Mr. Richmond asked.

"Damn your fine words! Yes, it is. I keep my flock clear of a foul sheep."

"Mr. Beltham, I implore you, be merciful. I submit to any conditions: only let me see her. I will walk the park till morning, but say that an interview shall be granted in the morning. Frankly, sir, it is not my intention to employ force: I throw myself utterly on your mercy. I love the woman; I have much to repent of. I see her, and I go; but once I must see her. So far I also speak positively."

"Speak as positively as you like," said the squire.

"By the laws of nature and the laws of man, Marian Richmond is mine to support and comfort, and none can hinder me, Mr. Beltham; none, if I resolve to take her to myself."

"Can't they!" said the squire.

"A curse be on him, heaven's lightnings descend on him, who keeps husband from wife in calamity!"

The squire whistled for his dogs.

As if wounded to the quick by this cold-blooded action, Mr. Richmond stood to his fullest height.

"Nor, sir, on my application during to-morrow's daylight shall I see her?"

"Nor, sir, on your application"—the squire drawled in uncontrollable mimicking contempt of the other's florid forms of speech, ending in his own style,—“no, you won’t.”

"You claim a paternal right to refuse me: my wife is your child. Good. I wish to see my son."

On that point the squire was equally decided. "You can't. He's asleep."

"I insist."

"Nonsense; I tell you he's abed and asleep."

"I repeat, I insist."

"When the boy's fast asleep, man!"

"The boy is my flesh and blood. You have spoken for your daughter—I speak for my son. I will see him, though I have to batter at your doors till sunrise."

Some minutes later the boy was taken out of his bed by his aunt Dorothy, who dressed him by the dark window-light, crying bitterly, while she said, "Hush, hush!" and fastened on his small garments between tender huggings of his body and kissings of his cheeks. He was told that he had nothing to be afraid of. A gentleman wanted to see him; nothing more. Whether the gentleman was a good gentleman, and not a robber, he could not learn; but his aunt Dorothy, having wrapped him warm in shawl and comforter, and tremblingly tied his hat-strings under his chin, assured him, with convulsive caresses, that it would soon be over, and he would soon be lying again snug and happy in his dear little bed. She handed him to Sewis on the stairs, keeping his fingers for an instant to kiss them; after which, old Sewis, the lord of the pantry,

where all sweet things were stored, deposited him on the floor of the hall, and he found himself facing the man of the night. It appeared to him that the stranger was of enormous size, like the giants of fairy books ; for as he stood a little out of the doorway there was a peep of night sky and trees behind him, and the trees looked very much smaller, and hardly any sky was to be seen except over his shoulders.

The squire seized one of the boy's hands to present him and retain him at the same time : but the stranger plucked him from his grandfather's hold, and swinging him high, exclaimed, "Here he is ! This is Harry Richmond. He has grown a grenadier."

"Kiss the little chap and back to bed with him," growled the squire.

The boy was heartily kissed and asked if he had forgotten his papa. He replied that he had no papa : he had a mamma and a grandpapa. The stranger gave a deep groan.

"You see what you have done ; you have cut me off from my own," he said terribly to the squire ; but tried immediately to soothe the urchin with nursery talk and the pats on the shoulder which encourage a little boy to grow fast and tall. "Four years of separation," he resumed, "and my son taught to think that he has no father. By heavens ! it is infamous, it is a curst piece of inhumanity. Mr. Beltham, if I do not see my wife, I carry off my son."

"You may ask till you're hoarse, you shall never see her in this house while I am here to command," said the squire.

"Very well ; then Harry Richmond changes homes. I take him. The affair is concluded."

"You take him from his mother ?" the squire sang out.

"You swear to me she has lost her wits ; she cannot suffer. I can. I shall not expect from you, Mr. Beltham, the minutest particle of comprehension of a father's feelings. You are earthy ; you are an animal."

The squire saw that he was about to lift the boy, and said, "Stop, never mind that. Stop, look at the case. You can call again to-morrow, and you can see me and talk it over."

"Shall I see my wife ?"

"No, you shan't."

"You remain faithful to your word, sir, do you ?"

"I do."

"Then I do similarly."

"What ! Stop ! Not to take a child like that out of a comfortable house at night in winter, man ?"

"Oh, the night is temperate and warm ; he shall not remain in a house where his father is dishonoured."

"Stop ! not a bit of it," cried the squire. "No one speaks of you. I give you my word, you're never mentioned by man, woman, or child in the house."

"Silence concerning a father insinuates dishonour, Mr. Beltham."

"Damn your fine speeches, and keep your blackguardly hands off that

boy," the squire thundered. "Mind, if you take him, he goes for good. He doesn't get a penny from me if you have the bringing of him up. You've done for him, if you decide that way. He may stand here a beggar in a stolen coat like you, and I won't own him. Here, Harry, come to me; come to your grandad."

Mr. Richmond caught the boy just when he was turning to run.

"That gentleman," he said, pointing to the squire, "is your grand-papa. I am your papa. You must learn at any cost to know and love your papa. If I call for you to-morrow or next day they will have played tricks with Harry Richmond, and hid him. Mr. Beltham, I request you, for the final time, to accord me your promise—observe, I accept your promise—that I shall, at my demand, to-morrow or the next day, obtain an interview with my wife."

The squire coughed out an emphatic "Never!" and fortified it with an oath as he repeated it upon a fuller breath.

"Sir, I will condescend to entreat you to grant this permission," said Mr. Richmond, urgently.

"No, never; I won't!" rejoined the squire, red in the face from a fit of angry coughing. "I won't; but stop, put down that boy; listen to me, you Richmond! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll—if you'll swear on a Bible, like a cadger before a bench of magistrates, you'll never show your face within a circuit o' ten miles hereabouts, and won't trouble the boy if you meet him, or my daughter, or me, or any one of us—harkye, I'll do this: let go the boy, and I'll give ye five hundred—I'll give ye a cheque on my banker for a thousand pounds; and, hark me out, you do this, you swear, as I said, on the servants' Bible, in the presence of my butler and me, 'Strike you dead as Ananias and t'other one if you don't keep to it,' do that now, here, on the spot, and I'll engage to see you paid fifty pounds a year into the bargain. Stop! and I'll pay your debts under two or three hundred. For God's sake, let go the boy! You shall have fifty guineas on account this minute. Let go the boy! And your son—there, I call him your son—your son, Harry Richmond, shall inherit from me; he shall have Riversley and the best part of my property, if not every bit of it. Is it a bargain? Will you swear? Don't, and the boy's a beggar, he's a stranger here as much as you. Take him, and by the Lord, you ruin him. There now, never mind, stay, down with him. He's got a cold already; ought to be in his bed; let the boy down!"

"You offer me money," Mr. Richmond answered. "That is one of the indignities belonging to a connection with a man like you. You would have me sell my son. To see my afflicted wife I would forfeit my heart's yearnings for my son; your money, sir, I toss to the winds; and I am under the necessity of informing you that I despise and loathe you. I shrink from the thought of exposing my son to your besotted, selfish example. The boy is mine; I have him, and he shall traverse the wilderness with me. By heaven! his destiny is brilliant. He shall be hailed for what he is, the rightful claimant of a place among the proudest

in the land; and mark me, Mr. Beltham, obstinate, sensual old man that you are! I take the boy, and I consecrate my life to the duty of establishing him in his proper rank and station, and there, if you live and I live, you shall behold him and bow your grovelling pig's head to the earth, and bemoan the day, by heaven! when you,—a common country squire, a man of no origin, a creature with whose blood we have mixed ours—and he is stone-blind to the honour conferred on him—when you in your besotted stupidity threatened to disinherit Harry Richmond."

The door slammed violently on such further speech as he had in him to utter. He seemed at first astonished; but finding the terrified boy about to sob, he drew a pretty box from one of his pockets and thrust a delicious sweetmeat between the whimpering lips. Then, after some moments of irresolution, during which he struck his chest soundingly and gazed down, talked alternately to himself and the boy, and cast his eyes along the windows of the house, he at last dropped on one knee and swaddled the boy in the folds of the shawl. Raising him in a business-like way, he settled him on an arm and stepped briskly across gravel-walk and lawn, like a horse to whose neck a smart touch of the whip has been applied.

The soft mild night had a moon behind it somewhere; and here and there a light-blue space of sky showed small rayless stars; the breeze smelt fresh of roots and heath. It was more a May-night than one of February. So strange an aspect had all these quiet hill-lines and larch and fir-tree tops in the half-dark stillness, that the boy's terrors were overlaid and almost subdued by his wonderment; he had never before been out in the night, and he must have feared to cry in it, for his sobs were not loud. On a rise of the park-road where a fir-plantation began, he heard his name called faintly from the house by a woman's voice that he knew to be his aunt Dorothy's. It came after him only once: "Harry Richmond;" but he was soon out of hearing, beyond the park, among the hollows that run dipping for miles beside the great high-road towards London. Sometimes his father whistled to him, or held him high and nodded a salutation to him, as though they had just discovered one another; and his perpetual accessibility to the influences of spicy sugar-plums, notwithstanding his grief, caused his father to prognosticate hopefully of his future wisdom. So, when obedient to command he had given his father a kiss, the boy fell asleep on his shoulder, ceasing to know that he was a wandering infant: and, if I remember rightly, he dreamed he was in a ship of cinnamon-wood upon a sea that rolled mightily, but smooth immense broad waves, and tore thing from thing without a sound or a hurt.

## CHAPTER II.

## AN ADVENTURE ON MY OWN ACCOUNT.

THAT night stands up without any clear traces about it or near it, like the brazen castle of romance round which the sea-tide flows. My father must have borne me miles along the road ; he must have procured food for me ; I have an idea of feeling a damp forehead and drinking new milk, and by-and-by hearing a roar of voices or vehicles, and seeing a dog that went alone through crowded streets without a master, doing as he pleased, and stopping every other dog he met. He took his turning, and my father and I took ours. We were in a house that, to my senses, had the smell of dark corners, in a street where all the house-doors were painted black, and shut with a bang. Italian organ-men and milk-men paraded the street regularly, and made it sound hollow to their music. Milk, and no cows anywhere ; numbers of people, and no acquaintances among them :—my thoughts were occupied by the singularity of such things.

My father could soon make me forget that I was transplanted ; he could act dog, tamer rabbit, fox, pony, and a whole nursery collection alive, but he was sometimes absent for days, and I was not of a temper to be on friendly terms with those who were unable to captivate my imagination as he had done. When he was at home I rode him all round the room and upstairs to bed, I lashed him with a whip till he frightened me, so real was his barking ; if I said "Menagerie" he became a caravan of wild beasts ; I undid a button of his waistcoat, and it was a lion that made a spring, roaring at me ; I pulled his coat-tails and off I went tugging at an old bear that swung a hind leg as he turned in the queerest way, and then sat up and beating his breast sent out a mew-moan. Our room was richer to me than all the Grange while these performances were going forward. His monkey was almost as wonderful as his bear, only he was too big for it, and was obliged to aim at reality in his representation of this animal by means of a number of breakages ; a defect that brought our landlady on the scene. The enchantment of my father's companionship caused me to suffer proportionately in his absence. During that period of solitude, my nursemaid had to order me to play, and I would stumble about and squat in the middle of the floor, struck suddenly by the marvel of the difference between my present and my other home. My father entered into arrangements with a Punch and Judy man for him to pay me regular morning visits opposite our window ; yet here again his genius defeated his kind intentions ; for happening once to stand by my side during the progress of the show, he made it so vivid to me by what he said and did, that I saw no fun in it without him : I used to dread the heralding crow of Punch if he was away, and cared no longer for wooden heads being knocked ever so hard. On Sundays we walked to the cathedral, and this was a day with a delight of its own for

me. He was never away on the Sunday. Both of us attired in our best, we walked along the streets hand in hand ; my father led me before the cathedral monuments, talking in a low tone of British victories, and commanding the heroes to my undivided attention. I understood very early that it was my duty to imitate them. While we remained in the cathedral he talked of glory and Old England, and dropped his voice in the middle of a murmured chaunt to introduce Nelson's name or some other great man's : and this recurred regularly. "What are we for now ?" he would ask me as we left our house. I had to decide whether we took a hero or an author, which I soon learnt to do with capricious resolution. We were one Sunday for Shakspeare ; another for Nelson or Pitt. "Nelson, papa," was my most frequent rejoinder, and he never dissented, but turned his steps towards Nelson's cathedral dome, and uncovered his head there, and said : "Nelson, then, to-day;" and we went straight to his monument to perform the act of homage. I chose Nelson in preference to the others because, towards bed-time in the evening, my father told me stories of our hero of the day, and neither Pitt nor Shakspeare lost an eye, or an arm, or fought with a huge white bear on the ice to make themselves interesting. I named them occasionally out of compassion, and to please my father, who said that they ought to have a turn. They were, he told me, in the habit of paying him a visit, whenever I had particularly neglected them, to learn the grounds for my disregard of their claims, and they urged him to intercede with me, and imparted many of their unpublished adventures, so that I should be tempted to give them a chance on the following Sunday.

'Great Will,' my father called Shakspeare, and 'Slender Billy,' Pitt. The scene where Great Will killed the deer, dragging Falstaff all over the park after it by the light of Bardolph's nose, upon which they put an extinguisher if they heard any of the keepers, and so left everybody groping about and catching the wrong person, was the most wonderful mixture of fun and tears. Great Will was extremely youthful, but everybody in the park called him, 'Father William ;' and when he wanted to know which way the deer had gone, King Lear (or else my memory deceives me) punned, and Lady Macbeth waved a handkerchief for it to be steeped in the blood of the deer ; Shylock ordered one pound of the carcase ; Hamlet (I cannot say why, but the fact was impressed on me) offered him a three-legged stool ; and a number of kings and knights and ladies lit their torches from Bardolph ; and away they flew distracting the keepers, and leaving Will and his troop to the deer. That poor thing died from a different weapon at each recital, though always with a flow of blood and a successful dash of his antlers into Falstaff ;—and to hear Falstaff bellow ! But it was mournful to hear how sorry Great Will was over the animal he had slain. He spoke like music. I found it pathetic in spite of my knowing that the whole scene was lighted up by Bardolph's nose. When I was just bursting out crying—for the deer's tongue was lolling out and quick pantings were at his side ; he had little ones at home

—Great Will remembered his engagement to sell Shylock a pound of the carcase ; determined that no Jew should eat of it, he bethought him that Falstaff could well spare a pound, and he said the Jew would not see the difference : Falstaff only got off by hard running and roaring out that he knew his unclean life would make him taste like pork and thus let the Jew into the trick.

My father related all this with such a veritable matter-of-fact air, and such liveliness—he sounded the chase and its cries, and showed King Lear tottering, and Hamlet standing dark, and the vast substance of Falstaff—that I followed the incidents excitedly, and really saw them, which was better than understanding them. I required some help from him to see that Hamlet's offer of a three-legged stool at a feverish moment of the chase, was laughable. He taught me what to think of it by pitching Great Will's voice high, and Hamlet's very low. By degrees I got some unconscious knowledge of the characters of Shakespeare. There never was so fascinating a father as mine for a boy anything under eight or ten years old. He could guess on Saturday whether I should name William Pitt on the Sunday ; for, on those occasions, ‘Slender Billy,’ as I hope I am not irreverent in calling him, made up for the dulness of his high career with a raspberry-jam tart, for which, my father told me solemnly, the illustrious Minister had in his day a passion. If I named him, my father would say, “W. P., otherwise S. B., was born in the year so-and-so; now,” and he went to the cupboard, “in the name of Politics, take this and meditate upon him.” The shops being all shut on Sunday, he certainly bought it, anticipating me unerringly, on the Saturday, and, as soon as the tart appeared, we both shouted. I fancy I remember his repeating a couplet,

Billy Pitt took a cake and a raspberry jam,  
When he heard they had taken Seringapatam.

At any rate, the rumour of his having done so at periods of strong excitement, led to the inexplicable display of foresight on my father's part. My meditations upon Pitt were, under this influence, favourable towards the post of a Prime Minister, but it was merely appetite that induced me to choose him ; I never could imagine a grandeur in his office, notwithstanding my father's eloquent talk of ruling a realm, shepherding a people, hurling British thunderbolts. The day's discipline was, that its selected hero should reign the undisputed monarch of it, so when I was for Pitt, I had my tart as he used to have it, and no story, for he had none, and I think my idea of the ruler of a realm presented him to me as a sort of shadow about a pastrycook's shop. But I surprised people by speaking of him. I made remarks to our landlady which caused her to throw up her hands and exclaim that I was astonishing. She would always add a mysterious word or two in the hearing of my nursemaid or any friend of hers who looked into my room to see me. After my father had got me forward with instructions on the piano, and exercises in early

English history and the book of the Peerage, I became the wonder of the house. I was put up on the stool to play "In my cottage near a wood," or "Cherry ripe," and then, to show the range of my accomplishments, I was asked, "And who married the Dowager Duchess of Dewlap?" and I answered, "John Gregg Wetherall, Esquire, and disgraced the family." Then they asked me how I accounted for her behaviour. "It was because the Duke married a dairymaid," I replied, always tossing up my chin at that. My father had concocted the questions and prepared me for the responses, but the effect was striking, both upon his visitors and the landlady's. Gradually my ear grew accustomed to her invariable whisper on these occasions. "Blood Rile," she said; and her friends all said "No!" like the run of a finger down a fiddlestring.

A gentleman of his acquaintance called on him one evening to take him out for a walk. My father happened to be playing with me when this gentleman entered our room: and he jumped up from his hands and knees, and abused him for intruding on his privacy, but afterwards he introduced him to me as Shylock's great-great-great-grandson, and said that Shylock was satisfied with a pound, and his descendant wanted two hundred pounds, or else all his body; and this, he said, came of the emigration of the family from Venice to England. My father only seemed angry, for he went off with Shylock's very great grandson arm-in-arm, exclaiming, "To the Rialto!" When I told Mrs. Waddy about the visitor, she said, "Oh, dear! oh, dear! then I'm afraid your sweet papa won't return very soon, my pretty pet." We waited a number of days, until Mrs. Waddy received a letter from him. She came full-dressed into my room, requesting me to give her twenty kisses for papa, and I looked on while she arranged her blue bonnet at the glass. The bonnet would not fix in its place. At last she sank down crying in a chair, and was all brown silk, and said that how to appear before a parcel of dreadful men, and perhaps a live duke into the bargain, was more than she knew, and more than could be expected of a lone widow woman. "Not for worlds!" she answered my petition to accompany her. She would not, she said, have me go to my papa *there* for anything on earth; my papa would perish at the sight of me; I was not even to wish to go. And then she exclaimed, "Oh, the blessed child's poor papa!" and that people were cruel to him, and would never take into account his lovely temper, and that everybody was his enemy, when he ought to be sitting with the highest in the land. I had realized the extremity of my forlorn state on a Sunday that passed empty of my father, which felt like his having gone for ever. My nursemaid came in to assist in settling Mrs. Waddy's bonnet above the six crisp curls, and while they were about it I sat quiet, plucking now and then at the brown silk, partly to beg to go with it, partly in jealousy and love at the thought of its seeing him from whom I was so awfully separated. Mrs. Waddy took fresh kisses off my lips, assuring me that my father would have them in twenty minutes, and I was to sit and count the time. My nursemaid let her out. I pretended to be

absorbed in counting, till I saw Mrs. Waddy pass by the window. My heart gave a leap of pain. I found the street-door open and no one in the passage, and I ran out, thinking that Mrs. Waddy would be obliged to take me if she discovered me by her side in the street.

I was by no means disconcerted at not seeing her immediately. Running on from one street to another, I took the turnings with unhesitating boldness, as if I had a destination in view. I must have been out an hour before I understood that Mrs. Waddy had eluded me; so I resolved to enjoy the shop-windows with the luxurious freedom of one whose speculations on those glorious things all up for show are no longer distracted by the run of time and a nursemaid. Little more than a glance was enough, now that I knew I could stay as long as I liked. If I stopped at all, it was rather to exhibit the bravado of liberty than to distinguish any particular shop with my preference: all were equally beautiful; so were the carriages; so were the people. Ladies frequently turned to look at me, perhaps because I had no covering on my head; but they did not interest me in the least. I should have been willing to ask them or any one where the Peerage lived, only my mind was quite full, and I did not care. I felt sure that a great deal of walking would ultimately bring me to St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey; to anything else I was indifferent.

Towards sunset my frame was struck as with an arrow by the sensations of hunger on passing a cook's-shop. I faltered along, hoping to reach a second one, without knowing why I had dragged my limbs from the first. There was a boy in ragged breeches, no taller than myself, standing tiptoe by the window of a very large and brilliant pastrycook's. He persuaded me to go into the shop and ask for a cake. I thought it perfectly natural to do so, being hungry; but when I reached the counter and felt the size of the shop, I was slightly abashed, and had to repeat the nature of my petition twice to the young woman presiding there.

"*Give you a cake, little boy?*" she said. "*We don't give cakes, we sell them.*"

"Because I am hungry," said I, pursuing my request.

Another young woman came, laughing and shaking lots of ringlets.

"Don't you see he's not a common boy? he doesn't whine," she remarked, and handed me a stale bun, saying, "Here, Master Charles, and you needn't say thank you."

"My name is Harry Richmond, and I thank you very much," I replied.

I heard her say, as I went out, "You can see he's a gentleman's son." The ragged boy was awaiting me eagerly. "Gemini! you're a lucky one," he cried: "here, come along, curly-poll." I believe that I meant to share the bun with him, but of course he could not be aware of my benevolent intentions: so he treated me as he thought I was for treating him, and making one snatch at the bun, ran off cramming it into his mouth. I stood looking at my hand. I learnt in that instant what thieving was, and begging, and hunger, for I would have perished rather than have

asked for another cake, and as I yearned for it in absolute want of food, the boy's ungenerous treatment of me came down in a cloud on my reason. I found myself being led through the crush of people, by an old gentleman, to whom I must have related an extraordinary rigmarole. He shook his head, saying that I was unintelligible; but the questions he put to me, "Why had I no hat on in the open street?" "Where did my mother live?" "What was I doing out alone in London?" were so many incitements to autobiographical composition to an infant mind, and I tumbled out my history afresh each time that he spoke. He led me into a square, stooping his head to listen all the while; but when I perceived that we had quitted the region of shops, I made myself quite intelligible by stopping short and crying: "I am so hungry." He nodded and said, "It's no use cross-examining an empty stomach. You'll do me the favour to dine with me, my little man. We'll talk over your affairs by-and-by." My alarm at having left the savoury street of shops was not soothed until I found myself sitting at table with him, and a nice young lady, and an old one who wore a cap, and made loud remarks on my garments and everything I did. I was introduced to them as the little boy dropped from the sky. The old gentleman would not allow me to be questioned before I had eaten. It was a memorable feast. I had soup, fish, meat and pastry, and, for the first time in my life, a glass of wine. How they laughed to see me blink and cough after I had swallowed half the glass like water. At once my tongue was unloosed. I seemed to rise right above the roofs of London, beneath which I had been but a wandering atom a few minutes ago. I talked of my wonderful father, and Great Will, and Pitt, and the Peerage. I amazed them with my knowledge. When I finished a long recital of Great Will's chase of the deer, by saying that I did not care about politics (I meant, in my own mind, that Pitt was dull in comparison), they laughed enormously, as if I had fired them off.

"Do you know what you are, sir?" said the old gentleman; he had frowning eyebrows and a merry mouth: "you're a comical character."

I felt interested in him, and asked him what he was. He informed me that he was a lawyer, and ready to be pantaloon to my clown, if I would engage him.

"Are you in the Peerage?" said I.

"Not yet," he replied.

"Well, then," said I, "I know nothing about you."

The young lady screamed with laughter. "Oh, you funny little boy; you killing little creature!" she said, and coming round to me, lifted me out of my chair, and wanted to know if I knew how to kiss.

"Oh, yes; I've been taught that," said I, giving the salute without waiting for the invitation: "but," I added, "I don't care about it much." She was indignant, and told me she was going to be offended, so I let her understand that I liked being kissed and played with in the

morning before I was up, and if she would come to my house ever so early, she would find me lying next the wall and ready for her.

"And who lies outside?" she asked.

"That's my papa," I was beginning to say, but broke the words with a sob, for I seemed to be separated from him now by the sea itself. They petted me tenderly. My story was extracted by alternate leading questions from the old gentleman and timely caresses from the ladies. I could tell them everything except the name of the street where I lived. My midnight excursion from the house of my grandfather excited them chiefly; also my having a mother alive who perpetually fanned her face and wore a ball-dress and a wreath; things that I remembered of my mother. The ladies observed that it was clear I was a romantic child. I noticed that the old gentleman said "Humph," very often, and his eyebrows were like a rook's nest in a tree when I spoke of my father walking away with Shylock's descendant and not since returning to me. A big book was fetched out of his library, in which he read my grandfather's name. I heard him mention it aloud. I had been placed on a stool beside a tea-tray near the fire, and there I saw the old red house of Riversley, and my mother dressed in white, and my aunt Dorothy; and they all complained that I had ceased to love them, and must go to bed, to which I had no objection. Somebody carried me up and undressed me, and promised me a great game of kissing in the morning.

The next day in the strange house I heard that the old gentleman had sent one of his clerks down to my grandfather at Riversley, and communicated with the constables in London; and, by-and-by, Mrs. Waddy arrived, having likewise visited those authorities, one of whom supported her claims upon me. But the old gentleman wished to keep me until his messenger returned from Riversley. He made all sorts of pretexts. In the end, he insisted on seeing my father, and Mrs. Waddy, after much hesitation, and even weeping, furnished the address: upon hearing which, spoken aside to him, he said, "I thought so." Mrs. Waddy entreated him to be respectful to my father, who was, she declared, his superior, and, begging everybody's pardon present, the superior of us all, through no sin of his own, that caused him to be so unfortunate; and a real Christian and pattern, in spite of outsides, though as true a gentleman as ever walked, and by rights should be amongst the highest. She repeated "amongst the highest" reprovingly, with the ears of barley in her blue bonnet shaking, and her hands clasped tight in her lap. Old Mr. Bannerbridge (that was the old gentleman's name) came back very late from his visit to my father, so late that he said it would be cruel to let me go out in the street after my bed-time. Mrs. Waddy consented to my remaining, on the condition of my being surrendered to her at nine o'clock, and no later, the following morning. I was assured by Mr. Bannerbridge that my father's health and appetite were excellent; he gave me a number of unsatisfying messages, all the rest concerning his interview he whispered to his daughter and his sister, Miss Bannerbridge, who said they

hoped they would have news from Hampshire very early, so that the poor child might be taken away by the friends of his infancy. I could understand that my father was disapproved of by them, and that I was a kind of shuttlecock flying between two battledores, but why they pitied me I could not understand. There was a great battle about me when Mrs. Waddy appeared punctual to her appointed hour. The victory was hers, and I, her prize, passed a whole day in different conveyances, the last of which landed us miles away from London, at the gates of an old drooping, mossed, and streaked farmhouse, that was like a wall-flower in colour.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### DIPWELL FARM.

In rain or in sunshine this old farmhouse had a constant resemblance to a wall-flower; and it had the same moist earthy smell, except in the kitchen, where John and Martha Thresher lived apart from their furniture. All the fresh eggs, and the butter stamped with three bees, and the pots of honey, the fowls, and the hare lifted out of the hamper by his hind legs, and the country loaves smelling heavenly, which used to come to Mrs. Waddy's address in London, and appear on my father's table, were products of Dipwell farm, and presents from her sister, Martha Thresher. On receiving this information I felt at home in a moment, and asked right off, "How long am I to stay here?—Am I going away to-morrow?—What's going to be done with me?" The women found these questions of a youthful wanderer touching. Between kissings and promises of hens to feed, and eggs that were to come of it, I settled into contentment. A strong impression was made on me by Mrs. Waddy's saying, "Here, Master Harry, your own papa will come for you; and you may be sure he will, for I have his word he will, and he's not one to break it, unless his country's against him; and for his darling boy he'd march against cannons. So here you'll sit and wait for him, won't you?" I sat down immediately, looking up. Mrs. Waddy and Mrs. Thresher raised their hands. I had given them some extraordinary proof of my love for my father. The impression I received was that sitting was the thing to conjure him to me.

"Where his heart's not concerned," Mrs. Waddy remarked of me flatteringly, "he's shrewd as a little schoolmaster."

"He've a birds'-nesting eye," said Mrs. Thresher, whose face I was studying.

John Thresher wagered I would be a man before either of them reached that goal. But whenever he spoke he suffered correction on account of his English.

"More than his eating and his drinking, that child's father worrits about his learning to speak the language of a British gentleman," Mrs.

Waddy exclaimed. "Before that child your *h's* must be like the panting of an engine—to please his father. He'd stop me carrying the dinner-tray or meat-dish hot, and I'm to repeat what I said, to make sure the child haven't heard anything ungrammatical. The child's nursemaid he'd lecture so, the poor girl would come down to me ready to bend double, like a bundle of nothing, his observations so took the pride out of her. That's because he's a father who knows his duty to the child:—'Child!' says he, 'man! ma'am.' It's just as you, John, when you sow your seed you think of your harvest. So don't take it ill of me, John; I beg of you be careful of your English. Turn it over as you're about to speak."

"Change loads on the road, you mean," said John Thresher. "Na, na, he's come to settle nigh a weedy field, if you like, but his crop ain't nigh reaping yet. Hark you, Mary Waddy, who're a widde, which's as much as say, an unocc'pied mind, there's cockney, and there's country, and there's school. Mix the three, strain, and throw away the sediment. Now, you's my view."

His wife and Mrs. Waddy said reflectively, in a breath, "True!"

"Drink or no, that's the trick o' brewery," he added.

They assented. They began praising him, too, like meek creatures.

"What John says is worth listening to, Mary. You may be over-careful. A stew's a stew, and not a boiling to shreds, and you want a steady fire, and not a furnace."

"Oh, I quite agree with John, Martha: we must take the good and the evil in a world like this."

"Then I'm no scholar, and you're at ease," said John.

Mrs. Waddy put her mouth to his ear.

Up went his eyebrows, wrinkling arches over a petrified stare.

In some way she had regained her advantage. "Are't sure of it?" he inquired.

"Pray don't offend me by expressing a doubt of it," she replied, bowing.

John Thresher poised me in the very centre of his gaze. He declared he would never have guessed that, and was reproved, inasmuch as he might have guessed it. He then said that I could not associate with any of the children thereabout, and my dwelling in the kitchen was not to be thought of. The idea of my dwelling in the kitchen seemed to be a serious consideration with Mrs. Martha likewise. I was led into the rooms of state. The sight of them was enough. I stamped my feet for the kitchen, and rarely in my life have been happier than there, dining and supping with John and Martha and the farm-labourers, expecting my father across the hills, and yet satisfied with the sun. To hope, and not be impatient, is really to believe, and this was my feeling in my father's absence. I knew he would come, without wishing to hurry him. He had the world beyond the hills; I this one, where a slow full river flowed from the sounding mill under our garden wall, through long meadows. In

winter the wild ducks made letters of the alphabet flying. On the other side of the copses bounding our home, there was a park containing trees old as the History of England, John Thresher said, and the thought of their venerable age enclosed me comfortably. He could not tell me whether he meant as old as the book of English History ; he fancied he did, for the furrow-track follows the plough close upon ; but no one exactly could swear when that (the book) was put together. At my suggestion, he fixed the trees to the date of the Heptarchy, a period of heavy ploughing. Thus begirt by Saxon times, I regarded Riversley as a place of extreme baldness, a Greenland, untrodden by my Alfred and my Harold. These heroes lived in the circle of Dipwell, confidently awaiting the arrival of my father. He sent me once a glorious letter. Mrs. Waddy took one of John Thresher's pigeons to London, and in the evening we beheld the bird cut the sky like an arrow, bringing round his neck a letter warm from him I loved. Planet communicating with planet would be not more wonderful to men than words of his to me, travelling in such a manner. I went to sleep, and awoke imagining the bird bursting out of heaven.

Meanwhile there was an attempt to set me moving again. A strange young man was noticed in the neighbourhood of the farm, and he accosted me at Leekham fair. "I say, don't we know one another ? How about your grandfather the squire, and your aunt, and Mr. Bannerbridge ? I've got news for you."

Not unwilling to hear him, I took his hand, leaving my companion, the miller's little girl, Mabel Sweetwinter, at a toy-stand, while Bob, her brother and our guardian, was shying sticks in a fine attitude. "Yes, and your father, too," said the young man ; "come along and see him ; you can run ?" I showed him how fast. We were pursued by Bob, who fought for me, and won me, and my allegiance instantly returned to him. He carried me almost the whole of the way back to Dipwell. Women must feel for the lucky heroes who win them something of what I felt for mine ; I kissed his bloody face, refusing to let him wipe it. John Thresher said to me at night, "Ay, now you've got a notion of boxing ; and will you believe it, Master Harry, there's people fools enough to want to tread that ther' first-rate pastime under foot ? I speak truth, and my word for 't, they'd better go in petticoats. Let clergymen preach in duty bound ; you and I'll uphold a manful sport, we will, and a cheer for Bob !" He assured me, and he had my entire faith, that boxing was England's natural protection from the foe. The comfort of having one like Bob to defend our country from invasion struck me as inexpressible. Lighted by John Thresher's burning patriotism, I entered the book of the History of England at about the pace of a cart-horse, with a huge waggon at my heels in the shape of John. There was no moving on until he was filled. His process of receiving historical knowledge was to fight over again the personages who did injury to our honour as a nation, then shake hands and be proud of them. "For where we ain't quite successful we're cunning," he said ; "and we not being able to get rid of William the Conqueror,

because he's got a will of his own and he won't budge, why, we takes and makes him one of ourselves ; and no disgrace in that, I should hope ! He paid us a compliment, don't you see, Master Harry ? he wanted to be an Englishman. ‘Can you this ?’ says we, sparrin’ up to him. ‘Pretty middlin’,’ says he, and does it well. ‘Well, then,’ says we, ‘then you’re one of us, and we’ll beat the world,’ and did so.” John Thresher had a laborious mind ; it cost him beads on his forehead to mount to these satisfactory heights of meditation. He told me once that he thought one’s country was like one’s wife : you were born in the first, and married to the second, and had to learn all about them afterwards, ay, and make the best of them. He recommended me to mix, strain, and throw away the sediment, for that was the trick o’ brewery. Every puzzle that beset him in life resolved to this cheerful precept, the value of which, he said, was shown by clear brown ale, the drink of the land. Even as a child I felt that he was peculiarly an Englishman. Tales of injustice done on the Niger river would flush him in a heat of wrath till he cried out for fresh taxes to chastise the villains. Yet at the sight of beggars at his gates he groaned at the taxes existing, and enjoined me to have pity on the poor taxpayer when I lent a hand to patch the laws. I promised him I would unreservedly, with a laugh, but with a sincere intention to legislate in a direct manner on his behalf. He, too, though he laughed, thanked me kindly.

I was clad in black for my distant mother. Mrs. Waddy brought down a young man from London to measure me, so that my mourning attire might be in the perfect cut of fashion. “The child’s papa would strip him if he saw him in a country tailor’s funeral suit,” she said, and seemed to blow a wind of changes on me that made me sure my father had begun to stir up his part of the world. He sent me a prayer in his own handwriting to say for my mother in heaven. I saw it flying up between black edges whenever I shut my eyes. Martha Thresher dosed me for liver. Mrs. Waddy found me pale by the fireside, and prescribed iron. Both agreed upon high-feeding, and the apothecary agreed with both in everything, which reconciled them, for both good women loved me so heartily they were near upon disputing over the medicines I was to consume. Under such affectionate treatment I betrayed the alarming symptom that my imagination was set more on my mother than on my father : I could not help thinking that for any one to go to heaven was stranger than to drive to Dipwell, and I had this idea when my father was clasping me in his arms ; but he melted it like snow off the fields. He came with postilions in advance of him wearing crape rosettes, as did the horses. We were in the cricket-field, where Dipwell was playing its first match of the season, and a Dipwell lad, furious to see the elevens commit such a breach of the rules and decency as to troop away while the game was hot, and surround my father, flung the cricket-ball into the midst and hit two or three of the men hard. My father had to shield him from the consequences. He said he liked that boy ; and he

pleaded for him so winningly and funnily that the man who was hurt most laughed loudest. Standing up in the carriage, and holding me by the hand, he addressed them by their names : " Sweetwinter, I thank you for your attention to my son ; and you, Thribble ; and you, my man ; and you, Baker ; Rippengale, and you ; and you, Jupp ;" as if he knew them personally. It was true he nodded at random. Then he delivered a short speech and named himself a regular subscriber to their innocent pleasures. He gave them money, and scattered silver coin among the boys and girls, and praised John Thresher, and Martha, his wife, for their care of me, and pointing to the chimneys of the farm, said that the house there was holy to him from henceforth, and he should visit it annually if possible, but always in the month of May, and in the shape of his subscription, as certain as the cowslip. The men, after their fit of cheering, appeared unwilling to recommence their play, so he alighted and delivered the first ball, and then walked away with my hand in his, saying : " Yes, my son, we will return to them tenfold what they have done for you. The eleventh day of May shall be a day of pleasure for Dipwell while I last, and you will keep it in memory of me when I am gone. And now to see the bed you have slept in."

Martha Thresher showed him the bed, showed him flowers I had planted, and a Spanish chestnut-tree just peeping.

" Ha ! " said he, beaming at every fresh sight of my doings : " madam, I am your life-long debtor and friend ! " He kissed her on the cheek.

John Thresher cried out : " Why, dame, you trembles like a maid."

She spoke very faintly, and was red in the face up to the time of our departure. John stood like a soldier. We drove away from a cheering crowd of cricketers and farm-labourers, as if discharged from a great gun. " A royal salvo !" said my father, and asked me earnestly whether I had forgotten to reward and take a particular farewell of any one of my friends. I told him I had forgotten no one, and thought it was true, until on our way up the sandy lane, which offered us a last close view of the old wall-flower farm-front, I saw little Mabel Sweetwinter, often my playfellow and bedfellow, a curly-headed girl, who would have danced on Sunday for a fairing, and eaten gingerbread nuts during a ghost-story. She was sitting by a furze-bush in flower, cherishing in her lap a lamb that had been worried. She looked half up at me, and kept looking so, but would not nod. Then good-by, thought I, and remembered her look when I had forgotten that of all the others.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### I HAVE A TASTE OF GRANDEUR.

THOUGH I had not previously seen a postilion in my life, I gazed on the pair bobbing regularly on their horses before me, without a thought upon the marvel of their sudden apparition and connection with my fortunes.

I could not tire of hearing the pleasant music of the many feet at the trot, and tried to explain to my father that the men going up and down made it like a piano that played of itself. He laughed and kissed me; he remembered having once shown me the inside of a piano when the keys were knocked. My love for him as we drove into London had a recognized footing: I perceived that he was my best friend and only true companion, besides his being my hero. The wicked men who had parted us were no longer able to do harm, he said. I forgot, in my gladness at their defeat, to ask what had become of Shylock's descendant.

Mrs. Waddy welcomed us when we alighted. Do not imagine that it was at the door of her old house. It was in a wide street opening on a splendid square, and pillars were before the houses, and inside there was the enchantment of a little fountain playing thin as whiccord, among ferns, in a rock-basin under a window that glowed with kings of England, copied from boys' history books. All the servants were drawn up in the hall to do homage to me. They seemed less real and living than the wonder of the sweet-smelling chairs, the birds, and the elegant dogs. Richest of treats a monkey was introduced to me. "It's your papa's whim," Mrs. Waddy said, resignedly; "he says he must have his jester. Indeed it is no joke to me." Yet she smiled happily, though her voice was melancholy. From her I now learnt that my name was Richmond Roy, and not Harry Richmond. I said, "Very well," for I was used to change. Everybody in the house wore a happy expression of countenance, except the monkey, who was too busy. As we mounted the stairs I saw more kings of England painted on the back-windows. Mrs. Waddy said: "It is considered to give a monarchical effect,"—she coughed modestly after the long word, and pursued: "as it should." I insisted upon going to the top-floor, where I expected to find William the Conqueror, and found him; but that strong connecting link between John Thresher and me presented himself only to carry my recollections of the Dipwell of yesterday as far back into the past as the old Norman days.

"And down go all the kings, downstairs," I said, surveying them consecutively.

"Yes," she replied, in a tone that might lead one to think it their lamentable fate. "And did the people look at you as you drove along through the streets, Master Richmond?"

I said, "Yes," in turn; and then we left off answering, but questioned one another, which is a quicker way of getting at facts: I know it is with boys and women. Mrs. Waddy cared much less to hear of Dipwell and its inhabitants than of the sensation created everywhere by our equipage. I noticed that when her voice was not melancholy her face was. She showed me a beautiful little pink bed, having a crown over it, in a room opening to my father's. Twenty thousand magnificent dreams seemed to flash their golden doors when I knew that the bed was mine. I thought it almost as nice as a place by my father's side.

"Don't you like it, Mrs. Waddy?" I said.

She smiled and sighed. "Like it? Oh! yes, my dear, to be sure I do. I only hope it won't vanish." She simpered and looked sad.

I had too many distractions, or I should have asked her whether my amazing and delightful new home had ever shown symptoms of vanishing; it appeared to me, judging from my experience, that nothing moved violently except myself, and my principal concern was lest any one should carry me away at a moment's notice. In the evening I was introduced to a company of gentlemen who were drinking wine after dinner with my father. They clapped their hands and laughed immoderately on my telling them that I thought those kings of England who could not find room on the windows must have gone down to the cellars.

"They are going," my father said. He drank off a glassful of wine and sighed prodigiously. "They are going, gentlemen, going there, like good wine, like old port, which they tell us is going also. Favour me by drinking to the health of Richmond Roy, the younger."

They drank to me heartily, but my father had fallen mournful before I left the room.

Pony-riding, and lessons in boxing and wrestling, and lessons in French from a French governess, at whose appearance my father always seemed to be beginning to dance a minuet, so exuberantly courteous was he; and lessons in Latin from a tutor, whom my father invited to dinner once a fortnight, but did not distinguish otherwise than occasionally to take down Latin sentences in a note-book from his dictation, occupied my mornings. My father told the man who instructed me in the art of self-defence that our family had always patronized his profession. I wrestled ten minutes every day with this man's son, and was regularly thrown. On fine afternoons I was dressed in black velvet for a drive in the park, where my father uncovered his head to numbers of people, and was much looked at. "It is our duty, my son, never to forget names and persons; I beg you to bear that in mind, my dearest Richie," he said. We used to go to his opera box; and we visited the House of Lords and the House of Commons; and my father, though he complained of the decay of British eloquence, and mourned for the days of Chatham, and William Pitt (our old friend of the cake and the raspberry jam), and Burke, and Sheridan, encouraged the orators with approving murmurs. My father no longer laid stress on my studies of the Peerage. "Now I have you in the very atmosphere, that will come of itself," he said. I wished to know whether I was likely to be transported suddenly to some other place. He assured me that nothing save a convulsion of the earth would do it, which comforted me, for I took the firmness of the earth in perfect trust. We spoke of our old Sunday walks to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey as of a day that had its charm. Our pew among a fashionable congregation pleased him better. The pew-opener curtseyed to none as she did to him. For my part, I missed the monuments and the chaunts, and something besides that had gone—I knew not what. At the first indication of gloom in me, my father became alarmed, and, after making me stand with my tongue

out before himself and Mrs. Waddy, like a dragon in a piece of tapestry, would resume his old playfulness, and try to be the same that he had been in Mrs. Waddy's lodgings. Then we read the *Arabian Nights* together, or, rather, he read them to me, often acting out the incidents as we rode or drove abroad. An omission to perform a duty was the fatal forgetfulness to sprinkle pepper on the cream-tarts ; if my father subjected me to an interrogation concerning my lessons, he was the dread African magician to whom must be surrendered my acquisition of the ring and the musty old lamp. We were quite in the habit of meeting fair Persians. He would frequently ejaculate that he resembled the Three Calendars in more respects than one. To divert me during my recovery from measles, he one day hired an actor in a theatre, and put a cloth round his neck, and seated him in a chair, rubbed his chin with soap, and played the part of the Barber over him, and I have never laughed so much in my life. Poor Mrs. Waddy got her hands at her sides, and kept on gasping, "Oh, sir ! oh !" while the Barber hurried away from the half-shaved young man to consult his pretended astrolabe in the next room, where we heard him shouting the sun's altitude, and consulting its willingness for the impatient young man to be further shaved ; and back he came, seeming refreshed to have learnt the sun's favourable opinion, and gabbling at an immense rate, full of barber's business. The servants were allowed to be spectators ; but as soon as the young man was shaved, my father dismissed him with the tone of a master. No wonder they loved him. Mrs. Waddy asked who could help it ? I remember a pang I had when she spoke of his exposure to the risk of marrying again ; it added a curious romantic tenderness to my adoration of him, and made me feel that he and I stood against the world. To have his hand in mine was my delight. Then it was that I could think earnestly of Prince Ahmed and the kind and beautiful Peribanou, whom I would not have minded his marrying. My favourite dream was to see him shooting an arrow in a match for a prize, and losing the prize because of not finding his arrow, and wondering where the arrow had flown to, and wandering after it till he passed out of green fields to grassy rocks, and to a stony desert, where at last he found his arrow at an enormous distance from the shooting line, and there was the desert all about him, and the sweetest fairy ever imagined going to show herself to him in the ground under his feet. In his absence I really hungered for him, and was jealous. During this Arabian life, we sat on a carpet that flew to the Continent, where I fell sick, and was cured by smelling at an apple ; and my father directed our movements through the aid of a telescope, which told us the titles of the hotels ready to receive us. As for the cities and cathedrals, the hot meadows under mountains, the rivers and the castles—they were little more to me than an animated book of geography, opening and shutting at random ; and travelling from place to place must have seemed to me so much like the life I had led, that I was generally as quick to cry as to laugh, and was never at peace between any two emotions. By-and-by I lay in a gondola with a young lady. My father made friends fast on our

travels : her parents were among the number, and she fell in love with me, and enjoyed having the name of Peribanou, which I bestowed on her for her delicious talk of the blue and red-striped posts that would spout up fountains of pearls if they were plucked from their beds, and the palaces that had flown out of the farthest corners of the world, and the city that would some night or other vanish suddenly, leaving bare sea and ripples to say "Where ? where ?" as they rolled over. I would have seen her marry my father happily. She was like rest and dreams to me, soft sea and pearls. We entered into an arrangement to correspond for life. Her name was Clara Goodwin ; she requested me to go always to the Horse Guards to discover in what part of the world Colonel Goodwin might be serving when I wanted to write to her. I, in return, could give no permanent address, so I related my history from the beginning. "To write to you would be the same as writing to a river," she said ; and insisted that I should drop the odious name of Roy when I grew a man. My father quarrelled with Colonel Goodwin. Months afterwards I felt as if I had only just been torn from Clara, but she stood in a mist, irrecoverably distant. I had no other friend.

Twelve dozen of splendid Burgundy were the fruit of our tour, to be laid down at Dipwell farm for my arrival at my majority, when I should be a legal man, embarked in my own ship, as my father said. I did not taste the wine. "Porter for me that day, please God !" cried Mrs. Waddy, who did. My father eyed her with pity, and ordered her to send the wine down to Dipwell, which was done. He took me between his knees, and said impressively, "Now, Richie, twelve dozen of the best that man can drink await you at the gates of manhood. Few fathers can say that to their sons, my boy ! If we drink it together, blessings on the day ! If I'm gone, Richie, shut up in the long box," his voice shook, and he added, "gone to Peribanou underneath, you know, remember that your dada saw that the wine was a good vintage, and bought it and had it bottled in his own presence while you were asleep in the Emperor's room in the fine old Burgundy city, and swore that, whatever came to them both, his son should drink the wine of princes on the day of his majority." Here my father's tone was highly exalted, and he sat in a great flush. I promised him I would bend my steps towards Dipwell to be there on my twenty-first birthday, and he pledged himself to be there in spirit at least, bodily if possible. We sealed the subject with some tears. He often talked of commissioning a poet to compose verses about that wonderful coming day at Dipwell. The thought of the day in store for us sent me strutting as though I had been in the presence of my drill-master. Mrs. Waddy, however, grew extremely melancholy at the mention of it. "Lord only knows where we shall all be by that time !" she sighed. "She is a dewy woman," said my father, disdainfully. They appeared always to be at variance, notwithstanding her absolute devotion to him. My father threatened to have her married to somebody immediately if she afflicted him with what he called her Waddyism. She had got the habit of exclaiming at

the end of her remarks, "No matter; our clock strikes soon!" in a way that communicated to me an obscure idea of a door going to open unexpectedly in one of the walls, and conduct us, by subterranean passages, into a new country. My father's method of rebuking her anxious nature was to summon his cook, the funniest of Frenchmen, Monsieur Alphonse, and issue orders for a succession of six dinner-parties. "And now, ma'am, you have occupation for your mind," he would say. To judge by the instantaneous composure of her whole appearance, he did produce a temporary abatement of her malady. The good soul hustled out of the room in attendance upon M. Alphonse, and never complained while the dinners lasted, but it was whispered that she had fits in the upper part of the house. No sooner did my father hear the rumour than he accused her to her face of this enormity, telling her that he was determined to effect a permanent cure, even though she should drive him to unlimited expense. We had a ball party and an Aladdin supper, and for a fortnight my father hired postilions; we flashed through London. My father backed a horse to run in the races on Epsom Downs named Prince Royal, only for the reason that his name was Prince Royal, and the horse won, which was, he said, a proof to me that in our country it was common prudence to stick to royalty; and he bade me note that if he went in a carriage and two, he was comparatively unnoticed, whereas when he was beheld in a carriage and four, with postilions, at a glance from him the country people tugged their forelocks, and would like, if he would let them, to kiss his hand. "We will try the scarlet livery on one of our drives, Richie," said he. Mrs. Waddy heard him. "It is unlawful, sir," she said. "For whom, ma'am?" asked my father. "None but royal . . ." she was explaining, but stopped, for he showed her an awful frown, and she cried so that my heart ached for her. My father went out to order the livery on the spot. He was very excited. Then it was that Mrs. Waddy, embracing me, said, "My dear, my own Master Richmond, my little Harry, prepare your poor child's heart for evil days." I construed her unintelligible speech as an attack upon my father, and abused her violently. While I was in this state of wrathful championship, the hall-door was opened. I ran out and caught sight of my aunt Dorethy, in company with old Mr. Bannerbridge. I was kissed and hugged for I know not how long, until the smell of Riversley took entire possession of me, and my old home seemed nearer than the one I lived in; but my aunt, seeing tears on my cheeks, asked me what was my cause of sorrow. In a moment I poured out a flood of complaints against Mrs. Waddy for vexing my father. When she heard of the scarlet livery, my aunt lifted her hands. "The man is near the end of his wits and his money together," said Mr. Bannerbridge; and she said to me, "My darling Harry will come back to his own nice little room, and see his grandpapa soon, won't you, my pet? All is ready for him there as it used to be, except poor mamma. 'Kiss my boy, my Harry—Harry Richmond.' Those were her last words on her death-bed, before she went to God,

Harry, my own ! There is Sampson, the pony, and Harry's dog, Prince, and his lamb, Daisy, grown a sheep, and the ploughboy, Dick, with the big boots." Much more sweet talk of the same current that made my face cloudy and bright, and filled me with desire for Riversley, to see my mother's grave and my friends.

Aunt Dorothy looked at me. "Come now," she said ; "come with me, Harry." Her trembling seized on me like a fire. I said, "Yes," though my heart sank as if I had lost my father with the word. She caught me in her arms tight, murmuring, "And dry our tears and make our house laugh. Oh ! since the night that Harry went . . . And I am now Harry's mamma, he has me."

I looked on her forehead for the wreath of white flowers my mother used to wear, and thought of my father's letter with the prayer written on the black-bordered page. I said I would go, but my joy in going was gone. We were stopped in the doorway by Mrs. Waddy. Nothing would tempt her to surrender me. Mr. Bannerbridge tried reasoning with her, and, as he said, put the case, which seemed to have perched on his forefinger for exposition. He talked of my prospects, of my sole chance of being educated morally and virtuously as became the grandson of an English gentleman of a good old family, and of my father having spent my mother's estate, and of the danger of his doing so with mine, and of religious duty and the awfulness of the position Mrs. Waddy stood in. He certainly subdued me to very silent breathing, but did not affect me as my aunt Dorothy's picturing of Riversley had done ; and when Mrs. Waddy, reduced to an apparent submissiveness, addressed me piteously, "Master Richmond, would you leave papa ?" I cried out, "No, no, never leave my papa," and twisted away from my aunt's keeping. My father's arrival caused me to be withdrawn, but I heard his offer of his hospitality and all that was his ; and subsequently there was loud talking on his part. I was kissed by my aunt before she went. She whispered, "Come to us when you are free ; think of us when you pray." She was full of tears. Mr. Bannerbridge patted my head. The door closed on them and I thought it was a vision that had passed. But now my father set my heart panting with questions as to the terrible possibility of us two ever being separated. In some way he painted my grandfather so black that I declared earnestly I would rather die than go to Riversley ; I would never utter the name of the place where there was evil speaking of the one I loved dearest. "Do not, my son," he said solemnly, "or it parts us two." I repeated after him, "I am a Roy and not a Beltham." It was enough to hear that insult and shame had been cast on him at Riversley for me to hate the name of the place. We cried and then laughed together, and I must have delivered myself with amazing eloquence, for my father held me at arms' length and said, "Richie, the notion of training you for a general-commandership of the British army is a good one, but if you have got the winning tongue, the woolsack will do as well for a whisper in the ear of the throne. That is our aim, my son.

We say,—you will not acknowledge our birth, you shall acknowledge our worth." He complained bitterly of my aunt Dorothy bringing a lawyer to our house. The sins of Mrs. Waddy were forgiven her, owing to her noble resistance to the legal gentleman's seductive speech. So I walked up and down stairs with the kings of England looking at me out of the coloured windows quietly for a week; and then two ugly men entered the house, causing me to suffer a fearful oppression, though my father was exceedingly kind to them and had beds provided for them, saying that they were very old retainers of his. But the next day our scarlet livery appeared. After exacting particular attention to his commands, my father quitted Mrs. Waddy, and we mounted the carriage, laughing at her deplorable eyes and prim lips, which he imitated for my amusement. "A load is off my head," he remarked. He asked me if splendour did not fatigue me also. I caught the answer from his face and replied that it did, and that I should like to go right on to Dipwell. "The Burgundy sleeps safe there," said my father, and thought over it. We had an extraordinary day. People stood fast to gaze at us; in the country some pulled off their hats and set up a cheer. The landlords of the inns where we baited remained bare-headed until we started afresh, and I, according to my father's example, bowed and lifted my cap gravely to persons saluting us along the roads. Nor did I seek to know the reason for this excess of respectfulness; I was beginning to take to it naturally. At the end of a dusty high-road, where it descends the hill into a town, we drew up close by a high red wall, behind which I heard boys shouting at play. We went among them, accompanied by their master. My father tipped the head boy for the benefit of the school, and following lunch with the master and his daughter, to whom I gave a kiss at her request, a half-holiday was granted to the boys in my name. How they cheered! The young lady saw my delight, and held me at the window while my father talked with hers; and for a long time after I beheld them in imagination talking: that is to say, my father issuing his instructions and Mr. Rippenger receiving them like a pliant hodman; for the result of it was that two days later, without seeing my kings of England, my home again, or London, I was Julia Rippenger's intimate friend and the youngest pupil of the school. My father told me subsequently that we slept at an hotel those two nights intervening. Memory transplants me from the coach and scarlet livery straight to my place of imprisonment.

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## Literary Exhaustion.

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LORD MACAULAY had a wonderful gift of plausibility, and his writings generally give one the impression, for a time, not only that he is right and his adversary wrong, but that each of his wretched adversaries in turn is about the greatest fool that ever lived. Everything is as clear and as simple as an early proposition in Euclid; and, according to his pet phrase, perfectly plain to a clever schoolboy of fourteen. The consequence is that one begins to feel a certain suspicion of any of his assertions, however cleverly he may have marshalled facts and arguments in their support. All the evidence required comes in too pat; every witness swears so precisely to the point in question, that we begin to reflect that a certain amount of discrepancy is a characteristic of honest and independent testimony; the key turns so smoothly that we fancy the lock must have been oiled; and, in short, we suspect some judicious "cooking" in the preparation of the case. I confess, at least, that this was my first impression on reading some interesting remarks in one of his speeches about copyright. It was desirable, from his point of view, to prove that the greatest works of the most eminent authors were generally produced late in life; and, with his wonderful fertility of illustration, he hurled authority after authority at his opponents, till it is no wonder that they gave way under his blows. In the course of his argument, he put forward two or three assertions which may be worth a little consideration. There is, he declares, no writer of the first order whose juvenile performances were his best. No work of imagination of the very highest class was ever, in any age or country, produced by a man under thirty-five. A great majority of the most valuable works in existence have been written in the last seventeen years of their authors' lives (the particular number—seventeen—is suggested by certain details of the proposed legislation). Amongst these may be reckoned *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, Bacon's *Norum Organum* and *De Augmentis*, Locke's *Essay*, Clarendon's *History*, Hume's *History*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Addison's *Spectator*, Burke's greatest works, *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia, and, with the exception of Waverley, all Scott's novels. For Lord Macaulay's special purpose it mattered not what was the explanation of this phenomenon, although he makes some cursory remarks as to the necessity of accumulating a store of learning and of thought, and of acquiring what is called a "profound knowledge of the human heart." The question, however, is naturally suggested whether, as a general rule, a man of fifty can produce better literary work than a man of five-and-twenty. If this were (as it is not) the point at issue, some of

Macaulay's facts would be irrelevant and some inaccurate. Clarendon, of course, could not compose his memoirs till he had lived them ; and, under ordinary circumstances, the kind of knowledge necessary for a great history, or for many other works, whether in science, philosophy, or theology, can only be acquired by a devotion to the task continued for many years, and by a thoroughly mature intellect. But that does not prove that a man's intellect may not be as vigorous and his work as satisfactory in his earlier as in his later years. Clarendon may have had as keen an eye for character and as great a power of telling a story before as after the Civil War, though at that time he had got no story to tell. The fact, that is, that such writings are generally produced late in life, proves nothing as to the power of the writer, but is the necessary result of the absence of materials. Hume, again, should really be an example on the opposite side. His philosophical works, which, for good or evil, have produced an influence scarcely excelled by those of any English writer, were published from the twenty-sixth to the forty-second year of his life. The *History*, which is now held to be hopelessly superficial, was the result of his later labours. Berkeley, his acutest predecessor, published his most remarkable metaphysical works at the age of twenty-six. Such precocity is singular in that branch of intellectual labour, which, above all, demands patient and systematic attention. But, not to inquire into this question at length, there is one definite statement here made by Lord Macaulay which has a special interest. If any writers are likely to obtain distinction in early life, one would certainly say that it should be the great imaginative creators. Is it then true, as Lord Macaulay says, that no work of imagination, "of the very highest class," was ever produced below the age of thirty-five ? Probably the answer would depend, to a great extent, upon the liberality with which we admitted works into that class and upon the definition of a work of imagination.

The more ordinary opinion is stated, and elaborately defended, in Helvetius' *De l'Esprit*. It is only from twenty-five to thirty-five or forty, he says, that one is capable of the greatest efforts both of virtue and of genius. After that age our passions weaken ; our intellect ceases to grow ; we acquire no new ideas, and though we may afterwards produce inferior work, it is only by applying and developing the ideas which occurred in our youth and which we did not then turn to account. We may work out our old materials, but we cannot originate. It would be curious to compare these opinions with facts. The complete accuracy of Lord Macaulay's assertion would, indeed, be difficult to maintain. If pictures are works of imagination we might have something to say about Raffaelle, and if the name be restricted to literary art, we might suggest that *Romeo and Juliet*, in the opinion of many people, belongs to the "very highest class," and was produced before the magic age. Or again we might ask whether some of the works of Burns, Byron, Keats, or Shelley do not come up to the required level. Perhaps it may be replied that though each of these writers showed extraor-

dinary powers, they rather promised than performed extraordinary things. Yet the class of which all their performances are to fall short must be admitted to be a very small one: and, in some instances, the age of the writer is now beyond our powers of discovery. *Faust*, we may presume, comes within the most exclusive list; and may suggest what is possibly the true meaning of the statement. Many of the most poetical parts were designed, and partly executed, when Goethe was still a very young man. It was not completed till he was past fifty. Its composition corresponded, therefore, to the theory of Helvetius, that the ideas generated by the fervour of youth were gradually developed and perfected in maturer life. And we may infer that, when it is possible for a man of genius to put the whole of his character into a single book, to combine the fire of his youth with the riper judgment of his maturity, he will produce work of the highest conceivable class. The class of books which correspond to this definition is small, but is something which stands by itself. However this may be, there is one variety of literature to which Lord Macaulay's doctrine seems to apply with greater force than we might expect. It sounds strange in these days of precocity, when most school-girls have begun to compose their novel, and have generally carried out their design unless prevented by an early marriage, that nearly all the great English novelists have been plants of slow growth. If, for example, we take Richardson, De Foe, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and Scott, we shall find that not one of them published his best works under forty. Richardson was past fifty when he published *Pamela*, and past sixty when he published *Clarissa Harlowe*. De Foe was over fifty when he took to story-telling. Fielding published *Joseph Andrews* at thirty-five, but did not produce *Tom Jones* till he was forty-two. Sterne published the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* at forty-one, and Scott began his marvellous series at the age of forty-three. Smollett, the least eminent of all the names mentioned, wrote *Roderick Random* at a very early age; but *Humphrey Clinker*, really his best story, did not appear till the year of his death.

It would be absurd to infer that admirable novels may not be produced at an earlier age. The *Pickwick Papers* would be there to confute me; and I need not dwell upon *Vanity Fair* or the wonderful story of *Barry Lyndon*. But one remark must occur to everybody. We are frequently called upon to admire the brilliant performance of some youthful writer. The wonderful power of style, vivacity of observation, quickness of sympathy, and all the other qualities which fill so many advertising columns, give promise of the highest merit. If we believe only half of what is said, it seems as though all that is wanted is just a little more polish and some of that skill in literary workmanship which practice alone can give. We look on with eager eyes, as a keen sportsman observes the brilliant performances of a two-year-old, and prophesies his coming glories at Epsom. Yet, as we know, two-year-olds are very apt to vanish mysteriously from betting-lists, and much-praised novelists seem

to have gradually less and less hold upon their critics. The slovenliness becomes more marked instead of gradually disappearing, and the good qualities, if they are still there, become less and less recognizable. When an artist has made a great success by painting, say a thrilling scene of murder, we know too well what is likely to happen. The first year, perhaps, it was the murder of William of Orange; next year we shall be treated to the murder of Henry IV.; then we shall have the murder of Rizzio; afterwards, perhaps, we shall be treated to classical murders, and witness the agonies of Julius Cæsar, and then come back to modern times and see the death of Lincoln. One murder will succeed another in dreary succession, each being rather less vivid than the last, and gradually dying away like successive reflections in opposing mirrors. What was once a brilliant work of art becomes a dismal product of manufacturing industry, turned out with the regularity and utter want of intelligence of a machine. In a remote country inn I was once foolish enough to praise a particular dish, perhaps a mutton-chop; and the cook, intoxicated by that unlucky panegyric, insisted upon providing a continuous series of mutton-chops, till the very name and sight and smell of that innocent dish became oppressive to me. Even if such chop was as good as its predecessors, my palate had become insensible to the charms of chops; but I rather think that the cook herself grew stupid from the limitation of her faculties. It is distressing to see a similar decay in the energies of young authors. Is it that, like the aforesaid two-year-olds, they have been injudiciously forced by premature praise, and that their constitutions are not strong enough to bear the strain? At any rate the breaking down of our young poets and novelists, just as their powers should be at the fullest maturity, is lamentably common. Few things are more melancholy than to see a man of true and recognized genius living upon the remnant of his old reputation, and always in constant jealousy of that worst of rivals, his former self. Critics, of course, are occasionally actuated by the meanest, though one of the commonest, of motives—the pleasure of picking holes in an object of general worship. They are, it may be admitted, too ready to cry out with affected regret, that each new work of an established writer shows manifest symptoms of decay; and authors may have some reason for flattering themselves, whenever disagreeable remarks are made about the obvious decline of their powers, that the remarks are prompted by an unworthy jealousy of their greatness. Yet, the fact remains that men's talents do decay, and that a man's last works frequently show symptoms of the process. It is melancholy to see the poor old actor still trying to keep the stage, and trying to produce the old effects with his stiff limbs and cracked voice. In such cases, however, we are regretting that a man who has done his best is not content to be silent for the future, and to make a dignified exit from the world. A certain sense of respectful regret tempers our annoyance with compassion. It should perhaps be really more painful to see a man still in his vigour ceasing to turn it to account, because, having once made a hit, he is trying to make the same

hit over again all the rest of his life. A curious chapter might be written on the fate of continuations. Did anybody ever follow Robinson Crusoe's adventures in his later years without regretting that he had ever again been sent on his travels? Is it not provoking to follow the progress of Mrs. Christian and all the little Christians, and the party of friends whom they pick up, after the original Pilgrim has been satisfactorily got across the river of death? I don't know whether a continuation was ever thoroughly successful: but I am sure that ninety-nine out of a hundred are illustrations of the extreme importance of a man's knowing when he has done enough. They are attempts to do in cold blood, and with a jaded imagination, what was only possible under the lively excitement which attends upon the first conception of a great work. It is a fact which does not seem to be generally recognized, that life never repeats itself; and that any attempt to get the old enjoyment out of the old elements almost invariably ends in a stale, unprofitable failure. Ask the same party of friends whose meeting has been a social success, and observe how melancholy they will be when trying to do it over again. Their conversation will, in all probability, be as spiritless as bottles of champagne that have been opened for the first meeting. It is hard to be jovial of malice prepense, and certainly not less hard to be poetical. In short, one of the most important arts we can learn is the art of leaving off.

The question, at any rate, of the causes of early literary exhaustion may be said to possess a real social importance. We have listened to long controversies as to the causes of grouse-disease, and the decay of the British race-horse. Is not the blight which attacks our most promising novelists, somewhere about the age of five-and-twenty or thirty, at least equally deserving of attention? The animals who suffer are not less dignified than those creatures which are thought worthy of preservation by the efforts of our legislature; and the sources of our supply of novels deserves as watchful jealousy as our means of producing game, or even of race-horses, though perhaps it cannot be regarded as quite equal to the maintenance of our coal-fields. It has become as unintelligible to us how people lived in the days before novels were invented, as how they lived before gas or electric telegraphs, or lucifer-matches or railways. Ladies are supposed to have taken refuge, to a considerable extent, in needlework; and others, it is whispered, were at times unfortunate enough to be driven to the study of Plato. We all know the picture of poor Lady Jane Grey muddling her unfortunate intellects with a huge Greek folio, because the only alternative open to her was fox-hunting. It is a melancholy illustration of the straits to which intelligent women might be driven in those days, and may help to alleviate our regret that the poor woman was sent so early out of a world which she must have found so tiresome. The novel-manufacture, however, has sprung up of late years with a rapidity to which the only parallel is to be found in the development of the cotton-trade or the growth of Chicago. Many persons have imbibed a quantity of literature in this fashion, which, if it had been composed of historical

annals, or works of controversial theology, would have entitled them to be reckoned amongst the learned men of their time. If they had studied old annalists instead of Alexander Dumas they would have been grave authorities on mediæval history. Whether they have done better or worse than if they had devoted themselves to drier branches of study, is a question which I do not propose to treat at the present moment. If they have laid up a smaller store of facts, they have certainly not been called upon to load their memories with so much unmitigated rubbish. It may be better that a person should be awakened to fresh interest in the details of modern life, than have spent years of labour in determining whether somebody who died some hundred years ago did or did not blow up her husband with gunpowder, and if so, whether it did or did not serve him right. But, for good or for evil, the novels we read are becoming as important to us as the water we drink or the food we eat. It is as desirable that we should be supplied with the best possible quality, and protected, by all legitimate means, from the danger of adulteration. I do not desire that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the subject, though it seems that Royal Commissions are regarded as exercising a kind of magical influence upon most topics, and that asking a few thousand questions about any grievance is held to be nearly the same thing as providing a remedy. Neither is there any guild of novelists corresponding to the Jockey Club, which might regulate the times and seasons at which novel-writing was to be held permissible. The only thing that remains is, that any one who pleases should speak his mind on the subject, though he may be merely helping to accumulate that most unprofitable of intellectual drugs—namely, good advice. For my part, I regard the author of a good novel as a public benefactor, and I consequently consider myself aggrieved when I see good material allowed to run to waste.

Now, some of the general principles by which the supply of literary works of art is governed are simple enough. They are pretty well summed up by saying that a man must write spontaneously and write from a full mind. He should write because he has something to say, and is irresistibly impelled to say it. The stream, according to Coleridge's metaphor, must come from a spring, and not from a pump. When the natural outpouring has ceased, a man must not go on squeezing an exhausted receiver, and giving us the mere rinsings and scrapings of his mind. When the cream has been all drawn off, we don't care for the skim-milk. Nobody should flatter himself that the fatigue which he feels in "straining from harebound brains" two novels a year will not communicate itself to his readers, and that the last crop from an exhausted field will not be inferior to the first products of the virgin soil. All this is plain enough, and the only difficulty lies in the application. It has been said, for example, that no work is really good of which the ultimate object is to make money. The principle would be a harsh one, and would condemn some of the greatest of existing works. Shakspeare, as Pendennis

truly remarked to Warrington, though Warrington, in reply, confounded his impudence, was just like one of themselves, and wrote to make an honest living. But Shakespeare, of course, wrote also because his mind was crammed even to an inconvenient extent with ideas, which crowded each other for utterance; and would not, it may be safely said, have written well if money had been his only object. This, in fact, is the only form in which the maxim can be accepted as approximately true; and undoubtedly it is the case that all really great writers have written, if partly in hopes of gain, yet partly, also, under an overpowering impulse. Want may have been the key which unlocked the reservoir; but it was previously full almost to bursting. And this, no doubt, is the secret of the real greatness of such men as Scott, Fielding, and Richardson. Mankind, to venture one more classification, may be divided into two great orders—those who find it dull, and those who don't. For myself, I confess that I belong to the first class: I find things, in general, remarkably commonplace. It appears to me that I never meet anybody who is not as like as possible to everybody else; that I never read an argument which has not been so hackneyed, that both the argument itself, and the answer to it, and the rejoinder to the answer, are all so many foregone conclusions; and that even the most original of men often seem to be people with a diseased appetite for novelty, but whose essential likeness to the rest is manifest even in their superficial eccentricity. And, therefore,—though I do not go so far as the gentleman who committed suicide simply because he found it dull,—I refrain from writing novels. But I know one or two people with whom all this is inverted. The world is to them a perpetual surprise. They never get into a railway-carriage without meeting somebody of altogether new and amazing character; they can scarcely take a constitutional without meeting an adventure; they can't listen to a couple of stockbrokers discussing the price of the funds without seeing something amazingly humorous in this unprecedented combination. The world to me, and, I fancy, to a large majority of us, is of a uniform dingy whitey-brown. To them it is full of sparkling and ever-varying colour, with dazzling lights and gloomy shades, and infinite complexity of detail. Each new acquaintance presents some interesting psychological problem, and every bit of gossip affords them whole volumes of sympathetic speculation. I suppose it is that I am one of the crowd, and observe nothing strange about the walkers who are walking in the same path with me. More fortunate persons are moving, as it were, in a direction transverse to the general current, and are startled at every moment by the shock of somebody moving in a diverging line. Whatever the cause, there can be no happier endowment, and I envy, without being able to share, the never-failing pleasure which it excites in its fortunate possessors. Now, these persons are the born novelists. It is their function to convey to our humdrum and prosaic minds some glimpse of the freshness and the splendour continually present to them. Under their enchantment we can

for a few moments see the world, as though we had just dropped from another planet, and everything had the charm of complete newness. No one can forget the first occasion on which he saw a foreign country, and how infinitely more foreign it looked than it has ever since appeared. The born novelist has the gift of preserving this freshness till comparatively late in life, and in regard not only to foreign countries but even to this monotonous and colourless place in which we pass our days. But though an essential element of great power, this is not the only qualification necessary. A man's early writings probably express the surprise and the delight, or the indignation, of a youth just entering the world, and discovering how different it is to his preconceived impressions. They have too, it may be, the contagion of exuberant animal spirits, and remind us of the delight of a lively child when first taken to the play. If this is the only secret, a writer's power must decline as he grows older. The mere frank unsophisticated surprise will go off, and the freshness will disappear with it, unless he has some more solid superstratum of talent. In fact, his interest in the world will only be permanent if he has powers of reflection as well as observation, and a keen and vigorous intellect capable of always developing new causes for animated inquiry. This was, no doubt, the case with the great men I have mentioned. There is really enduring substance in their writing, because the intelligent interest of a grown man has succeeded to the simple surprise of the boy. No doubt, as Wordsworth tells us, something of "the glory and the dream" has disappeared; the vision which still attended the youth has faded into the light of common day; but the loss is not without compensation, if the mind has grown more powerful, though it may be less flexible and less easily impressionable. The greatest works will probably be those of men who have lived long enough to have been taught to sympathize by many sufferings, and to learn to look for something more than the mere superficial glitter which attracts us in early life. Cervantes would not have written *Don Quixote* without the bitter influence of a long and unfortunate life.

Remembering this, it is not difficult to account for the early failure of a good many of our promising novelists. There is, to all appearance, a large class of writers who are practically convinced that nothing more is necessary to writing a novel than a sufficient supply of pens, ink, and paper. It is supposed to be the easiest and simplest of all acts, instead of being one of the most difficult. The mill, it is imagined, may go on grinding out finished products for ever, though we don't take the trouble to supply it with the raw materials. It is very easy to take half-a-dozen fictitious characters, set the good young gentleman to love the handsome young lady, introduce the villain to make a little mischief, fill up gaps with smart conversation, and portion everybody handsomely at the end by killing some inconvenient uncle. It requires no conjuror to account for the failure of such productions as are now poured out by the dozen. I am told that many masterpieces of the ancient painters are

sold in America and the colonies at a surprisingly cheap price. They are, it is reported, manufactured by a very simple process at Birmingham or elsewhere. There is one man kept constantly at work painting bright blue skies ; another has a knack of doing the trees ; a third turns out sheep and shepherdesses by the dozen ; and so, by a judicious division of labour, a work is put together which passes muster very well at Snoggsville or New Manchester for a Turner or a Claude. I fancy that novels might be concocted as easily by a company of authors. Most small novelists have some little knack which once enabled them to find a market for their productions ; they are pretty good hands at a villain or perhaps at a London pauper ; they can turn off a sparkling conversation or paint a thrilling love-scene passably ; and, on the strength of their single talent they go on deluging us with novels not positively bad, because one little grain of merit redeems the utter insipidity of the mass. Why should not they join their heads together, and as it is out of the question that they should produce a real work of art, at least manage to devise a creditable piece of paper-staining ? Indignation or ferocious criticism is entirely out of place with regard to people, who should at worst be objects of compassion. A man must live, in his own opinion at any rate, the man who draws ships with coloured chalk on London pavements as well as the members of the Royal Academy : and the trade of novel-writing is at least an honest one. People who have any remnants of literary ambition may, however, do well to remark how many of the best novels that have been written are more or less autobiographies in disguise. The most telling situations are those in which the author is finding expression for the lessons of his own experience, and really appealing to our sympathies through a thin disguise of fictitious character. The fact may suggest—not that it is well to make merchandise of one's own sufferings or affections—but that the necessity of living a story before writing it, has some meaning for novelists as well as for the authors of memoirs. In short, one must have gone through some crisis of reflection and feeling before one can very well expect that others should much care to listen to one's views of the world.

The mistake, however, of talking without having anything to say is too common and too palpable to deserve many remarks. We can only lament in passing that so many of our fellow-creatures are doomed to the sad necessity, and especially that many fall into it who are fit for better things. Sir Walter Scott, writing *Anne of Gierstein* or *Castle Dangerous*, suggests some melancholy thoughts. And it is plain enough that our modern "starring" system is at the bottom of too many such catastrophes. Our commerce suffers, it is said, because marks of the most established reputation are frequently put upon inferior goods. Authors have discovered the same trick of trade, and as soon as they have made a name, turn it to the best account by selling it as an advertisement to rubbish. The juvenile works of no great author are his best, according to Macaulay. If so, we must be in a singular dearth of great authors, for the superiority

of first attempts to second is becoming almost proverbial. This is not a healthy symptom. It means that having written for fame, people too often begin writing for profit. Scott's wonderful success was a most disastrous precedent. It was amongst the first proofs that the production of works of art might be made into a commercial pursuit ; and that the style of the work might be lowered without commercial loss. We are apt to rejoice that the days of patronage are over, or rather that the public is become the only patron. If it was a patron of any judgment, our satisfaction might be without alloy. But as it is a patron which is frequently of the most exacting disposition, which will not allow a minute's repose to its favourites, which bribes them heavily to be always at work, with or without a spontaneous impulse, which at first accepts indiscriminately any productions which bear a well-known name, and then suddenly wakes up angrily to a sense that it has been imposed upon, which generally pays very little for the first masterpiece, and makes it up by rewarding the weaker repetitions extravagantly, we cannot say that the change is altogether and in all respects an improvement. We too often do our best to spoil our favourites, and then revile them for the decline of their powers. Fortunately there are some writers who are superior to the temptations so profusely offered ; and who have sufficient strength of mind to wait for a calmer judgment. Unluckily, even this is not a perfectly satisfactory guarantee. There are some other motives—more creditable to the writer than the desire to snatch a premature success, and yet working a more subtle mischief—upon which we may dwell for a moment. Novelists, especially of the better class, are sometimes cursed with a most unfortunate propensity. It seems to them that they are so wise and good that they ought to improve their generation, and so full of genius that they should expound the principles of sound art to the world at large. Accordingly, we get that style of novel which is most provoking to the unsophisticated mind—the novel which really ought to be a sermon, or the novel which appears to be written in illustration of a professor's lecture. That novels may point a moral, and that they may illustrate an aesthetical maxim, is what I would not for a moment deny. Most good novels, in fact, do both. But when they are written with that deliberate purpose and excogitated with a kind of malice prepense, in cold-blooded desire to do good, they are not apt to be a refreshing kind of literature. We know the tortures to which children are sometimes subjected under the pretence of combining instruction with amusement, or of teaching science in play. The infant mind assents to transparent imposture, and we do not grow much more amenable in our maturer years. We feel that if the artist had abandoned himself to his natural impulses, and allowed his vivid descriptions to give rise to such morals as his readers might please to draw, he might have served us well ; or if he had sat down to expound his principles in the plainest and most direct language, he might have instructed us. But when he is trying to do both together he becomes awkward and constrained, and we seem to

see a professor masquerading in a costume which hampers his movements instead of revealing his true character. The hybrid works of this kind which are generally produced—the novel with a moral, or the historical novel or the novel of high art, in spite of some brilliant examples which might be alleged on the other side—are generally depressing to my soul; and I think that by people in general they are a good deal more feared than enjoyed. Where the natural artistic impulse has grown weak, it would surely be better to yield to necessity, instead of forcing the current of new ideas into a channel into which they no longer flow spontaneously.

I have spoken chiefly of novels, perhaps because the literature of the day seems to consist chiefly of novels, with a sprinkling of more serious matter. Some people fancy that the era of novels is passing; that every possible combination of character and incident has been invented, and every vein of sentiment worked out. From the grand philosophical romance, down to the most frivolous collection of insignificant twaddle; from the deepest tragedy, to simple buffoonery; from terrific sensation, down to the most quiet domestic jogtrot: we have been treated to every conceivable variety of composition. Unless new forms of character should be developed in the new world or in the distant countries with which we are becoming familiar, the game of the novelist will be, in Yankee phrase, played out. The same weariness which I have noticed as affecting the individual may apply to the whole class, and the world at large become tiresome to its inhabitants. I do not precisely believe in this; if it is true that our best contemporaries do not now seem equal to some of their predecessors, they may (for it is pleasant to be sanguine) improve by keeping; or perhaps we are only waiting for the coming man who is to show that a new light may be thrown upon the old topics. Just before the greatest outburst of modern poetry, people had convinced themselves that poetry was nearly extinct, because the modern world was essentially prosaic; and the same doctrine has lately been preached, without, as it seems to me, any particular plausibility. But if the impression is due, in part, to the apparent failure of any promising young novelists, it must be said that the early exhaustion which seems to be so common is by no means confined to this particular class of literature. To say nothing of poets who sing one tune with the persistency of a barrel-organ, we might possibly find instances, only that it would be awkward to give them, of politicians who have apparently had but one idea, and expended it very early in life; of preachers who have flourished for a day, and held forth to empty churches on the morrow; or even of historians who have run to seed, and after starting with the utmost flourish of trumpets, have sunk into a very steady commonplace respectability. The only safety, one is sometimes inclined to think, would be to contribute to that kind of literature which makes no demands upon the imagination, and depends entirely upon the comparison of figures or the proper filling of certain established pigeon-holes. Nobody can criticize a statistical return, or say that it shows a want of the old colouring and force. Nor, indeed, is

there any reason to suppose that a man cannot go on inventing mathematical problems or dealing with scientific inquiries to the end of his life ; and he will, at any rate, be able to judge by an easier blot of his having maintained his ancient level in such pursuits. They want patience instead of high spirits, and perfect calmness of mind instead of power of invention. Whether a man may not be exhausted by a well-devised system of competitive examination, so as to be good for nothing after he has taken his degree, is, indeed, still an open question ; but that is a mode of producing early imbecility which scarcely comes within the present inquiry.

There is, however, one branch of literature in which this sort of decay is at least as manifest as in novels. Essay-writers form a distinct and highly creditable class of English authors. The art is in one sense a very simple one, though it is by no means easy to acquire in perfection. You have to say nothing, or next to nothing, but it must be said in a good many words ; you must take the merest commonplace and beat it out so thin that it will cover any required number of sheets ; but then it must be done with a sufficient air and grace to give the reader the impression that he is really being treated to food worthy of a reasonable creature. If you prefer the sentimental and moral style of writing you must assert that honesty is the best policy as confidently and emphatically as if nobody had ever heard the remark. If you prefer to be paradoxical you may prove that honesty is the worst policy with equal vigour, and trust that nobody will find out the rather transparent trick. In the hands of a great master, an Addison or a Charles Lamb, the feat is performed so dexterously that you care nothing for the substance adorned by so perfect a style, and illustrated with such tact and delicacy. Whether it is a diamond or a bit of glass, the setting is equally admirable ; the cooking is everything, and the substance is entirely concealed by the sauce. But when the same feat is attempted by clumsy hands, it is not wonderful that the result is somewhat different. Some modern essayists appear to live on so marvellously small a stock of commonplaces that we wonder at the audacity required to serve them up ; and yet they show their opinion of the public taste by not condescending to disguise them. Whether that opinion is correct or false, is more than I can say ; judging by myself, it is distinctly mistaken : for of all the rapid products of exhausted authors, none seem to me so completely insipid as those of the unlucky essayist who is trying to amuse me by the hundredth variation on an originally uninteresting air. There is at least one moral which I may deduce from this without offence ; inasmuch as I am more closely concerned in it than anybody who has taken the trouble to read thus far : its nature may be inferred from the statement that this is the last article to appear under the present signature.

A CYNIC.

## L'Empire c'est la Paix.

### REMINISCENCES OF A ZOUAVE.

#### I.

I REMEMBER being particularly pleased at reading in a newspaper the fine speech of our Prince President, in which he said : " *L'Empire c'est la paix.*" He was only Prince President then, but it didn't matter. " If Empire means peace," said I, " I'm for an Empire."

" And why ? " asked Blanchette.

" Because if it's peace they won't be wanting any soldiers, and I shan't have to serve my seven years."

" That's true," murmured Blanchette, blushing a little. " Then I'm for an Empire, too."

Blanchette and I were betrothed to one another : at least it was almost a settled thing between Blanchette's father, old Jean Poireau, and me, that if I wasn't taken by the conscription, he'd hear what I'd got to say about being married. I didn't much like him, old Jean Poireau. If I waited for Blanchette after vespers, or danced more than one quadrille with her at the village balls, he'd come up and say, " Look here, young Aristide, just you sheer off ; when you've drawn your lot and I know what's to become of you, then we'll see ; but, for the present, keep your distance." Blanchette and I were often reduced to nodding to each other and sighing. I believe she thought it hard ; I know I did.

Well, the conscription week arrived at last, and the drawing of the lots was to come off on the Friday. On the Sunday, going in to Mass (church is always very full on the Sunday before the conscription), I met Blanchette and said, " Blanchette, Blanchette, I feel all the courage running out of me as the day approaches ; if I draw a bad number, the best thing I can do is to go and throw myself into the pond."

" No, no," answered Blanchette, rather pale ; " you mustn't do that. Promise me you won't do it," she added, laying a hand on my sleeve. Her eyes were full of tears, and her little hand shook. I thought myself a brute for making her miserable. I pressed her hand somewhat tremulously and whispered,—

" I'll tell you what, Blanchette : I'll go and call to-morrow on that Deputy of ours, M. de Champ-Guimauve, who makes us such fine promises at election time. I've never asked him for anything, and he can't refuse to drop a word to the Prefect about getting me exempted. He'll tell him I'm short-sighted, or that there's something the matter with my heart, which will be true enough, Blanchette."

Blanchette dried her eyes and tried to smile. When Blanchette

smiled it put hope in me for a whole day. We sat side by side at Mass that morning, and on the morrow early I started for the château of Champ-Guimauve, with two of mother's best capons in my basket, and a bunch of winter flowers in my hand. You see it's always as well not to go empty-handed, even when calling upon a millionaire.

M. le Comte de Champ-Guimauve was the great man of our district. In 1851 we were living under a Republic, but we called him M. le Comte all the same; which used to annoy him at election time, when he would insist upon being addressed as "Citizen," saying that we were all brothers, and that he was not a jot more than we were. Very affable he was, to be sure, at election time, M. de Champ-Guimauve; and it was on the strength of this that I had determined to go and appeal to his kindness.

To tell the truth, however, what I purposed asking him was not exactly—well, no, not exactly fair, for the law said that those only should be exempted from service, who could pay for a substitute, who were the only sons of widows, or who had bodily infirmities, and I stood in none of these categories. But then, it was well known that the Count never scrupled to use his influence for his own tenants, and so why should he not do as much for me? Besides, as Empire meant peace (and everybody was beginning to say we should soon have an Empire), what could the Government care about one soldier more or less?

I found M. de Champ-Guimauve reading the *Moniteur Universel* on his lawn, with a cup of coffee before him, and a cigar between his lips. There was no election near, so that he didn't offer any objection when I addressed him as Monsieur le Comte. I don't even think he would have been much offended had I called him Monseigneur, as I noticed his two footmen did. He was graciously pleased to accept my two fowls, and promised that the flowers should be remitted to Madame la Comtesse; then, he set his eyeglass in his left eye and asked me what I wanted.

Upon this, I confess I felt rather as if I should like to turn back and go home, for M. le Comte de Guimauve with the eyeglass, and the Citizen Guimauve who had shaken hands with us all in front of the ballot-box, were individuals so entirely unlike, that it was difficult to realize they formed but one and the same person. I began to mumble something about the conscription, but made such a mess of it that he soon pulled me up, by exclaiming,—

"Ah! just so, I perfectly understand; you are going to become one of our brave national defenders, and have come to say good-by. Well, my lad, I wish you joy, and" (here an affable smile) "plenty of fighting."

This wasn't it at all. I stammered and looked foolish.

"No, M. le Comte, it's just the other way. I agree with your speech about universal brotherhood, and no more conscription. You remember what you said about the conscription being like a monster that devoured its own children? I'd rather not fight anybody; I want to become 'an honest tiller of the soil' and marry Blanchette."

I observed that the visage of our Deputy visibly lengthened as I

recapitulated the items from his last electoral address ; the term " honest tiller of the soil " was also his. He coughed, drew up his shirt-collar, and answered somewhat confusedly,—

" H'm, just so ; I am, as you say, devoted to peace, and have always—yes, always—admired brotherhood. Nothing like brotherhood. But—ahem—if you had learned Latin, you would perceive the truth of the words *Si vis pacem, para bellum*—the meaning of which is, that unless France has a large standing army, civilization would be shaken in its basis, and there could be no security either for your father's field or for mine. It is from this motive, and this alone, that I voted the contingent of eighty thousand men this year. I beg your pardon, I didn't catch your remark."

" I was saying that it was very hard, M. le Comte, to be taken for seven years against one's will."

M. le Comte joined the fingers of both his hands by the tips, and answered with unction :

" It is one of the most glorious traditions of democracy that every citizen shall pay his debt to the State, and the obligation falls upon all alike. Whilst you, my lad, will give seven years of your life, I on my side shall not be exempt. This very year I shall have to pay no less than two thousand five hundred francs to exonerate my son Hector ; another of my sons, the Vicomte de Champ-Guimauve, is actually serving his country at the present moment in a regiment of hussars."

" Yes, M. le Comte," I rejoined, with some bitterness ; " but the Vicomte de Guimauve is an officer, and can marry if he likes."

" But so will you in due time acquire a grade in the service if you be diligent and valiant. Listen, my lad," added our Deputy with a sudden display of benevolence : " you may rely upon me ; if you are taken by the conscription, I will exert my influence with the Ministry of War, and get you made—yes, get you made—a corporal."

" And Blanchette ?" I muttered, not much seduced by this brilliant prospect.

" Who is Blanchette ?" inquired our Deputy, who, I may here remark, put wax to his moustaches, wore dye on his hair, and passed for an admirer of the adverse sex.

I explained who Blanchette was, M. le Comte listening with more attention than he had bestowed upon several of my other observations ; and when I had done, he exclaimed, with an encouraging smile,—

" Rest easy, my good boy ; I have heard of this Mademoiselle Blanchette, though I have never seen her. I will speak to her father if you go away, and we will take care that she is not married to any but a worthy man."

After this consolation, all that remained for me to do was to disappear, which I did with due speed. Don't ask me if I sang and whistled on the road going home, nor if I looked exuberantly cheerful during the next three days. There were ten or a dozen of my fellow-villagers in the same predicament as myself, and it wouldn't have done to put on a wry

face before them. After all, a man is a man, you know, and must hold his head high. If I suffered anything, I hope I kept it to myself. By Friday morning I had got my pulse into subjection, and was prepared to face the fire—I mean the conscription-box—in the same kind of spirit in which a man had better always face unpleasantnesses.

Just as I was walking up to the Mairie to draw my lot, Blanchette, who had been looking out for me, wondering why I had kept aloof from her during three days, ran across the road and slipped a small parcel into my hand. It contained a medal of the Virgin and a note. Here is the note ; I have not altered the spelling :—

Aristide, they say that To ware this next the hart and To repeatte three times an AVE MARIA, and to say just Before dipping one's hand Into the box, "*Sainte Vierge de Bon secours, écoutez celle qui m'aime,*" will make one draw a Good numbr. Please do it, Aristide, and you mustn't laugh in Doing it. You knowe it can't ever Do any harm.

#### BLANCHETTE.

No, Blanchette, it did no harm, I am certain ; but probably Fortune was out of sorts with me that day, for when I dipped my hand into the box—and I did not laugh, I assure you—I drew out a number which I could not read at first from thinking of you. So I gave it to the Mayor, who read it for me.

"What number ?" asked the Prefect ; and there was a second's pause whilst the paper was being unfolded.

"Number thirteen," cried the Mayor.

"Good for the service," pronounced the General.

And ten days after, my poor Blanchette, I was a Zouave.

#### II.

There was no positive reason why I should hurry off so soon, for at that time the Government used considerably to give us five months' law : we drew in February and joined in July. But where would have been the use of waiting ? No sooner was the drawing over than old Jean Poireau said to me, "Aristide, my lad, I'm sorry for you, but you see it's all up now, and I trust to your honour not to say anything more to Blanchette." The next day, seeing me come out of the Mayor's house, where I had been to get my passport, he looked at me as if he were relenting a little, and cried, "Listen, lad : I don't mind your seeing her just once more before you start—to say good-by." But I answered, "No, Father Poireau, best not ; you shall shake hands with her for me ; I am going this evening." And, sure enough, I took the train the same night.

You understand why I selected the Zouaves in preference to any other regiment.\* The Zouaves were always garrisoned in Algeria then ; their

\* A soldier who joins immediately after conscription is at liberty to choose his own regiment. If he avails himself of the five months' law (as most do), he is drafted according to his height and his breadth of limb. The lithest only are put into the Zouaves.

mission was to make the Arabs pay taxes; and as the Arabs would neither pay nor submit to our military tribunals—which for reasons of their own they considered detestable,—there was usually some fighting every quarter-day to compel them. It wasn't the tax-paying I cared about; I confess it was all one to me whether the Arabs settled their dues or not. But the Arabs fought like men, and in my then frame of mind I shouldn't have been over-sorry if one of them had singled me out and cut my military career short. You see, that's the kind of impression being taken away from one's village makes upon one at first. By-and-by, when we have carried the musket a little, we grow wiser, or more callous, I don't know which.

I had not been a fortnight on African soil, and had scarcely got used to having the front part of my head shaved, as the fashion is in the Zouaves, when I was ordered off with my battalion to chastise Sidi-Ben-Mahmoud, of the tribe of Dusti. It wasn't quite clear to me what Sidi-Ben had done to deserve our visit; but as far as I could gather, he and his fathers had lived contentedly in the same village for a couple of centuries, and he obstinately refused to decamp in order that we might build a fortress on his property. That year, as it so happened, there had been a debate in the Chambers about the condition of Algeria. It was complained that we were doing nothing there, that we had been twenty years in possession without effecting the least good, that the English would have colonized the country in half the time. The members of the Opposition had insisted clamorously that we should civilize the Arabs, and the Prince President had sent pressing orders to the Governor-General to push on the work of civilization without delay. Our Colonel, M. de Fracasse, reminded us of these facts as we set off, and remarked that it was absolutely binding upon us to文明 Sidi-Ben. So away we went to attack his village. Sidi-Ben and his people defended themselves like lions, and gave us as warm a piece of work as we could have wished for. The fighting lasted all day, from ten in the morning to six at night, and we lost two hundred men—eighty killed, a hundred and twenty wounded. But in the end we got the best of it, and we civilized Sidi-Ben; for, when the battle was over, there was not a single stone in the village left standing upon another: the camels, sheep, horses, men, women, and children were all hacked into mincemeat, and Sidi-Ben himself lay gloriously dead in the middle of the field with twenty wounds upon him.

I kept so resolutely to the front throughout all this affair, that when we returned to barracks, Colonel de Fracasse called me up and said, "Aristide Brosse, you're the sort of soldier I like. You take as kindly to fighting as a babe to mother's milk. I make a corporal of you."

So there was I a corporal. Instead of five sous paid regularly every five days, I received ten sous; on my sleeve I wore a red worsted stripe; and I was exempt from mounting guard. So far so good. But there was another aspect of my corporal's grade which I found less diverting. I had twenty men under my supervision, and if they were not irreproachably

furbished as to their rifles, shoes, bayonets, knapsack-buckles, and uniform buttons, it was I who bore the blame of it. This leads me to remark what an edifying lot we were in our Zouave regiments. The Government would accept nobody for a Zouave who was not tough, nimble, and firm on his legs. But morals being no great object, the hot-tempered, rowdy, black-eyed countrymen of Provence were the most welcome ; they fought like the Arch-fiend when they were campaigning, and behaved much like the same personage when they were in garrison. It was with great pleasure I heard it said one day by a patriotic Prefect, that the army was an invaluable school for acquiring habits of steadiness and order ; for I acknowledge it would hardly have occurred to me to enunciate such an opinion myself. When my men were not on duty they were drinking absinthe ; if they were not drinking absinthe they were sustaining the national reputation for gallantry by laying siege to the wives and daughters of Arabs, who (I am talking of the male Arabs) broke their heads in return, or got their own broken, for the greater glory of civilization. The proportion of deaths among us from *delirium tremens* was seven per cent. per annum,—a piece of statistics you will find in the official reports of the War Office for the year 1851, if you will take the trouble to consult that record.

I remained in Algeria nine months, during which period I had the satisfaction of judging how unreservedly we were hated in that loyal colony, and how extremely probable it is that we shall continue to be hated there a hundred years hence, if we are not driven out of the country before that time. At the end of the nine months M. de Fracasse was summoned to Paris with his regiment. This was the first experiment in the way of having Zouaves to occupy garrisons in France, and there was considerable curiosity both amongst the public and amongst us ourselves to see what would come of it.

It was towards the middle of November, and the first observation I heard upon setting foot anew on French soil was, that "Empire was peace." Paris was in a steadily progressive state of simmer ; Monsieur the Prince Président was being depicted every day in the *Charivari* with a beaked nose, a circumstance which, I recollect, struck me as ominous ; for experience has shown that whenever the French Press is suffered to reach the beaked-nose stage of liberty, something curious is preparing behind the curtain. We Zouaves had nothing to complain of as regards the way in which we were received. On the contrary, it was as if we had suddenly landed in the City of the Blessed. Rations of wine, packets of cigars, roast-meat to our ordinary, inspection and compliments by M. le Prince Président in person, distribution of five-franc pieces, all came showering down upon us like refreshing manna. Our officers received presents of game and dozens of champagne from the Elysée Bonaparte ; and I believe all the regiments in Paris were treated with the same disinterested liberality as we. Naturally, we liked it ; and when told that it would continue so all the year round, if only there could be an Empire instead

of a finikin, flint-skinning Chamber, that was for ever doing its best to prevent the President from being open-handed, we were all agreed that the best thing Monsieur the President could do would be to send the Chamber to the right-about. This was especially my view, for the Government organs never ceased repeating that Empire meant peace, diminution of armaments, and encouragement of agriculture: things for which I cared more than for the cigars and the roast-meat. I had not forgotten Blanchette.

One morning M. de Fracasse rode into the barrack-yard, looking flushed and elated; it escaped none of us that he was wearing the ribbon of Commander of the Legion of Honour, instead of the rosette of officer which he had sported the day before. He was a handsome man, Colonel de Fracasse, and, when under the influence of a glass or two of Burgundy, had no lack of eloquence.

"Zouaves," cried he, "don't you think we have had enough of a Republic managed by an Assembly of canting 'citizens,' who humbug us with a lot of promises they never intend to keep?"

The image of the Citizen Champ-Guimauve started up before me, and I shouted energetically, "Yes, yes!"

The Colonel eyed me with pleasure. "Corporal Brosse," said he, "you're a brave soldier." Upon which encouragement my brother-Zouaves lost no time in roaring "Yes, yes!" too.

"Bravo!" responded the Colonel, delighted. "That's it, my men; who is there among you that wouldn't like to have his pay doubled, or to be sent home to his village, at his option?—"

The cheers waxed deafening.

"Who is there that wouldn't like to have his glass full of wine, his pouch full of tobacco, and to marry the girl of his thoughts?—"

We grew black in the face.

"Then *vive le Prince*—"

But no, I snatched off my turban, and, at the top of my voice, with all my heart and soul, shouted, "*Vive l'Empereur.*"

The self-same hour I was made a sergeant, and a couple of days afterwards I was lying in the military hospital of the Val de Grâce, having been knocked over in the memorable affray that followed the *Coup d'Etat*.

### III.

"You've done a pretty piece of work, Sergeant," groaned a man who was lying next me amongst the wounded at the Hôtel de Ville, before we were transferred to the hospital.

He made an effort to raise himself on one elbow; but the blood that was flowing from a bullet-wound in his chest left him no strength, and he sank back on the flags.

"Feel in my coat," he muttered, "and you'll find a pocket-book with my name and address, some letters, and some money. You're my

enemy, but I can trust you to carry them to my wife." A throb of pain interrupted him, and caused him to pant; but he resumed,—" Tell her she must forgive me—you see, I promised her this morning that I wouldn't join in the fighting—she cried, and that's why I promised her—but when I saw you soldiers killing the Republic, I didn't think I had any right to stand by—so I fought: tell her that, won't you? And—I've two little children at home; let her tell them from me that a man can die but once, and that so long as his life has been—has been—" He made another painful effort to raise himself, but there was a new gush of blood, and his words froze on his lips. When I crawled to him to search for his pocket-book, he could only look at me as if in gratitude; but I believe he was already dead.

A few minutes afterwards a patrol came in, with some officers and police-detectives, to separate the wounded soldiers from the "rebels," and to carry the former to the hospital, the latter to the prison infirmaries. As I was being lifted on a stretcher (one of my legs was broken) a detective stooped to examine my neighbour. "Oh, we know this one fast enough," he cried, with a grin; "it's one of those cursed radical journalists: a good riddance of a bad rubbish." And he gave the body a kick.

I writhed on my stretcher and felt myself glowing, seeing which an officer said,—"Do you feel pain, my good fellow? Cheer up; you've spilt your blood in a noble cause, and you won't go unrewarded."

Well, no, I didn't go unrewarded: I must do them that justice. Whilst I was lying at the Val de Grâce, not much cast down by my wound, but gloomy from some other cause that I couldn't quite explain, I had my promotion as colour-sergeant brought me, though you'll remember I'd not been plain sergeant above a few days. "Sergeant Brosse, I congratulate you," said Colonel de Fracasse, who had come to the hospital to visit those of his regiment who were wounded. "Your conduct was admirable, my man. When we gutted the house of that infernal Jacobin Deputy, it did one's heart good to see you work your bayonet. Fifteen dead in that house alone, and five women amongst them! I'm sorry for the women, but why the deuce didn't they keep out of the way. Tonnerre de Dieu! Brosse, but it was a fine day, and the Reds won't forget it in a hurry. *Vive l'Empereur!* and *vive l'Armée*, eh, my lad!"

*Vive l'Armée!* It seemed to me a little inappropriate that he should cry *Vive l'Armée* at a time when we had just established a new Government that was pledged to give us peace. *Vive la Paix!* according to my notions, would have been more the thing, and as soon as I was released from hospital I gave effect to these views by asking for a month's leave to go and visit my village. I have no need to tell you why I was so anxious about this month's leave; it wasn't the impatience to air my uniform with its two gold chevrons; but I own the hope had waved in me more than once of late, that old Jean Poireau, who had declined to give his daughter to a conscript, with one sou a day, might allow her to

wait a few months for a sergeant-major, whose pay was close upon two francs. The Adjutant-major, however, refused me leave point-blank. "Brosse, you're a valuable soldier," said he, "and we can't do without you. It's not more than four months now since the *Coup d'Etat*; and these Parisians, you know, we daren't trust them further than we can see 'em. At any moment we may be called upon to do another stroke of work."

"What, wasn't there enough blood-letting last December?" I murmured; and the vision of the gutted house, with its slaughtered women, rose up before me like a distant nightmare.

"That was nothing," replied the Adjutant quietly. "Please heaven, one of these days we'll have much better fun than that, Brosse." And he turned on his heel, giving me a Havannah cigar to console me for not going to see Blanchette.

There was nothing for it but to wait. It was more than a year since I had looked at Blanchette, but I had heard news of her once or twice in letters from our village; and soon after the Adjutant had refused me leave, I received a letter in which, amongst other items, it was said: "You will be Glad to hear, Aristide, that your old sweethart Blanchette is in good heath, and prettier than evr. But she's no longr a poor villige gurl for Mossieu le Conte de Cham-Guimauve, Who has bin very goode to the Poireau famly evr since you went, has founde her a place as dresmaker up at the town'e of Mauveville, where she's very hapy and erns 4 Francs a day. Last time she cayme to the villige she had on a silk gownd."

I thought well of M. de Guimauve for keeping his word to me, and was glad to learn that Blanchette had got a silk gown. The letter had not come by post; it was brought me by a fellow-villager of the name of Fourniceau, who had just joined our regiment as a recruit, and who assured me that Blanchette had shed a great many tears after my departure—poor Blanchette. He also confirmed the assertion as to M. de Champ-Guimauve's kindness. The Count had come more than once to see old Jean Poireau; he had improved his cottage for him, and had procured Blanchette a place, so that she might not spoil her pretty hands churning butter and kneading bread. I felt softened towards M. de Guimauve, and regretted I had ever wronged him in thought. Perhaps Fourniceau caught a trace of my emotion, for he exclaimed with a great gulp that sounded curiously like a sob, "Oh, Sergeant, there's nothing like our village. I, too, was to have been married, if it hadn't been for this conscription. You know Rose Mignon: she was the prettiest girl in the village."

"Patience, Fourniceau, patience; you'll see her again."

"Yes, Sergeant, but we should have been so happy together." (Here the honest fellow rammed four thick knuckles into each of his eyes.) "We were betrothed ever since we were so high—not four feet from the ground—and she swore she would never forget me. But how can I hope that

now?" (And at this Fourmiceau's tears, oozing out between his fingers, inundated his woeful countenance). "Once our back's turned, Sergeant, what have we to hope? We can't ask them to wait seven years for us."

"But it won't be seven years, Fourmiceau," I answered, endeavouring to solace him; "the Empire's not proclaimed yet; but it seems that in a day or two the Senate are going to Saint Cloud to offer the crown to the Prince President."

"And what difference will that make?" he inquired with a sigh.

"Why, Empire is peace, Fourmiceau, and the Emperor, as soon as he is at the Tuilleries, will send us all home; the Colonel said so."

"Oh, God bless the Emperor," cried Fourmiceau fervently; and I fancy he went off that very moment to write a letter to Rose Mignon, begging her to wait for him just a little while longer.

I was quite correct in what I said about the Senate, for I had seen it in the *Moniteur*. Some days later, at morning parade, we were ordered for duty at mid-day to form a guard of honour on the road of the deputation. There were not only us Zouaves, but all the infantry of the Paris garrison—thirty thousand men—and we formed a complete double line the entire way from Paris to Saint Cloud. It was a fine sight: the whole population of the city was afoot, as it always is, to see anything that may happen to be going on, from a church ceremonial to a revolution, and the windows were gaudy with bunting, scarlet draperies, and long waving streamers lettered N. III. All the traces of the December affair had disappeared. At most, had you searched the crowd, you might have found some child or woman in mourning, hurrying along to get out of sound of the festivity, and refusing to stop and look on, and cheer with the rest. But I do not fancy there were many of these; the people in mourning stayed at home; and the carriages of the Senators could roll unimpeded between two close-packed lines of curious Parisians, who, it seems, were almost as excited and enthusiastic as they had been four years before, when the Republic was proclaimed. I must say, however, if enthusiastic as a body they were not sparing of criticisms individually, and, as carriage after carriage swept by, bearing Senators or Deputies (for there was also a deputation of representatives going to see the sight), I heard some rather astonishing comments from the spectators behind me:—"Hi, Jules, do you see old De Tournecasque? he's wearing just the same face as he did when he went to swear allegiance to Charles X. and Louis Philippe—the old hunks." "Here's another again, look at him; it's De la Broche-Craquelin, who betrayed Henri V., and, beside him, Floupin, the late solicitor to the Orleans family. Ugh! go and wash, both of you!" "Here's another pretty pair, Turpigny and De Borné, a couple of badgers to match; they'd both have been in Clichy by this time, if it hadn't been for the *Coup d'Etat*"—and so on flowed the compliments without a moment's cease. I listened, rather amused at first, for, after all, it was no concern of mine what they said; but, at last, amongst the carriages of the Deputies, came that of M. de Champ-Guimauve, who had

recently been re-elected in our Department as an official candidate, and his arrival was saluted by this broadside :—“ Oh, here’s De Champ-Guimauve, the old sinner ; when he’s not dangling after some ballet-girl, he’s sure to be dancing a jig before the reigning Government. I saw him with a red bonnet on in ‘48, crying *Vive la République* ; kick him from ever so high, he’s sure to fall on his legs.” At these words my patience abandoned me. It was Blanchette’s benefactor they were insulting in this way ; so I turned round in wrath and shouted—“ What do you mean by speaking like this of your betters ? ” I suppose I looked rather ferocious with my half-shaved head and my new moustache, for they suddenly held their peace, and the rest of the procession passed by unscathed. I have remarked, by-the-by, that it is not very difficult to make Parisians hold their tongues if you speak loud with a rifle in your hand.

Well, the deputation went and came, and there were mighty rejoicings and illuminations that night to celebrate the auspicious change from Republicanism to Empire. The soldiers had wine given them in the barracks, and we non-commissioned officers were regaled with Bordeaux and a glass of Cognac apiece. However, the Empire was not yet proclaimed officially ; that was only to happen in December, eight months afterwards, and so I still had to take patience before I could hope for long leave, or expect to be disbanded. After all, I reflected, we must be reasonable ; the Emperor has only just reached the throne ; he can’t reduce his army before making certain that he is safe. Let us wait our eight months.

And I did, and I was recompensed for my steadfastness : for at length the day of glory arrived, the Empire was solemnly proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville ; there was a *Te Deum* at Notre Dame, and the whole army blossomed out into the new buttons, with the Imperial eagle and crown upon them. I am not a drunkard, but I make no secret of having drained three bottles that day and toasted the Emperor until the tables seemed to be dancing an infernal waltz around me. As a result I was not particularly steady when I tottered to bed, but I had presence of mind enough to ejaculate as I turned in between sheets,—

“ At last ! Providence be extolled ! We shall have peace now.”

#### IV.

Would you believe that when, some six weeks after this, I applied again for leave, the Adjutant took me kindly by the arm and drew me aside into a corner, where, in a mysterious voice, and without further preparation, he said : “ Look here, Sergeant Brosse : I don’t mind telling you—for you’re made of good stuff and won’t blab—we’re soon going to have a war.”

Had the Adjutant suddenly fired a pistol at my turban without cause or warning, I could not have given a more tremendous start.

“ War ! ” I echoed, hoarsely.

“ Yes, war,” he rejoined. “ I knew you would be pleased ; but, hush !

not a word to anybody : the thing's a secret and none of us are supposed to know it.””

“ And who are we going to fight ? ”

“ Hush ! I needn’t tell you that. You’re a Frenchman, Brosse, and in your patriotic heart must feel the wound of Waterloo rankle at every hour of the day. Stuff, man, it’s no use denying ; I’ve seen you at work and know you’re one of the right sort. Well, you’ll soon have a war to your heart’s content : none of your trashy battles against Arabs or Reds, but a good slap-up tussle, with plenty of cracks on the head and promotion to follow.”

“ Then we are going to fight the English,” I observed, with calm desperation.

“ That’s it, to fight the English. You understand,—the Emperor must show these caper-cutting Parisians that there’s some of the old blood in him. If he doesn’t fall foul of somebody they’ll think he’s cast in the same mould as that poor old Louis-Philippe, who gave us almost eighteen years of peace ; and that would never do ; the people would soon be snapping their fingers in his face. No, Brosse, he must wipe off the old score of Waterloo, and you and I’ll help him to do it. You can have three days’ leave, if you like ; but we can’t give you more, for the recruits ’ll be coming up soon, and you’ll have to drill ‘em with all your might and main.”

“ And this is the Empire of Peace,” I remarked, with a ghastly grin.

“ Yes,” replied the Adjutant, grinning too, “ we shall have peace—after the war.”

What should you have done under such circumstances ; sat down and howled ? This would not have been a great assistance to me. I went straight off to a circulating library, asked for an annual register, drew out a pencil and paper, and set to work computing, by the aid of figures and probabilities, how long this heaven-forsaken campaign was likely to last. England, I was delighted to observe, was as ill prepared for a war as possible. Nominal strength of army, 85,000 ; probable effective strength, 40,000. The navy, to be sure, looked biggish ; but that branch didn’t concern me. Against the 40,000 men we could launch 400,000 without trouble—*i.e.* ten men to one. Presumable result : have the English out in Flanders and eat up the last man in three weeks. Total duration of campaign, including preparations, about two months.

“ Well, it’s not so bad as I thought,” I murmured, a little relieved. “ If operations commence shortly it will only put off my seeing Blanquette for three or four months. Meantime, it’s no use going to the village for a couple of days only ; I’ll wait.” Accordingly, I applied myself with zeal to the drilling of recruits.

Had I been less absorbed than I was with ideas of universal harmony, I might have noticed long before, that ever since H. I. M. the Friend of Peace had held the reins of power, the offensive forces of the country had been slowly increasing. As President he had added to the war contingent

every year ; as Emperor, he had inaugurated his reign by bravely calling for twenty thousand more men than usual. There were signs, too, not discernible to the civilian mind, but which, as a soldier, ought to have struck me. All the magazines and store-houses were being replenished ; our rifles were being examined, tested, and often exchanged for better ones ; new accoutrements were not stinted ; the cavalry were being remounted and reorganized ; leave was difficult to obtain. These tokens are so many hieroglyphics which signify hostilities. However, the war did not come so quickly as the Adjutant had seemed to think. One month passed, then a second, then two or three more, and yet there appeared no symptoms of a quarrel with Great Britain. On the contrary, the talk was only about our brave allies, and the sympathique M. de Palmerston, and M. le Comte d'Aberdeen, who loved us well, and about the new journey from Paris to London in twelve hours, price 110 francs first class. When I called the Adjutant's attention to these unpromising symptoms, he replied that it was all "bunkum." "We're doing it to throw dust into their eyes," said he. "Perfidious Albion will guess nothing until we are down upon her. But even the Adjutant was soon bound to own that his perspicacity had been at fault. France and England, for a while hand in hand, were soon locked arm in arm. The time-honoured pictures of ridiculous Highlanders vanished like magic from the print-shop windows ; the comic actors who were great at playing Englishmen were significantly recommended to throw less local colour than usual into their exercises ; journalism received a hint not to poke fun at the British. A new foe was looming on the horizon in the shape of the Czar of All the Muscovies, whom Gaul would not have cared to tackle without Albion.

Shall we fight or shall we not ? The question oscillated on the trays of the balance for a doubtful time, until at last the ayes had it—war was declared.

Then it was as though France had been abruptly roused from a forty years' lethargy. A ferocious thrill shot throughout the land. In every village where there lingered a living wreck of that mighty army that marched to defeat and death in the Russian snows in 1812 ; in every hamlet where the middle-aged men remembered the Cossack invasion of 1814, there was a crusade preached such as never Peter the Hermit rivalled. Young men sang the *Marseillaise*, and flew to be enrolled ; old men looked up and talked of being revenged ; young girls would smile upon none but soldiers, and accounted them poltroons who stayed behind ; mothers sat down, and, with a sigh of patience, made lint—for mothers will never have a heart for war, say Ambition and Glory what they will. And there was all this excitement, all this fury, all this indescribable delirium, all these defiant shouts of men in public, all these tears of women in secret, for the sake of killing a few Russians. It is curious that men should hate each other so cordially from living on opposite sides of a boundary line.

In Paris everything was topsy-turvy. It does honour to humanity

that an individual who had been harmlessly founding a society for the propagation of peace doctrines, and who had laboriously gathered a few subscriptions towards the same end, became of a sudden an object of contumely, and had to run one afternoon on the Boulevard des Capucines for his life ; whilst on the other hand, subscriptions for the war poured in at such a ceaseless rate that ten million francs were reached in no time. Nobody remembered the *Coup d'Etat* or bore rancour from it ; that was a thing of the past, now ; ought we not all to remain united in face of the enemy ? Calling to remembrance the condoning stuff of which we Frenchmen are moulded, I am often tempted to wonder that our rulers do not treat us to a *Coup d'Etat* more frequently, since they can obtain indemnity so easily by leading us off to a war. It was just exactly as if the people of France had made this bargain with our Emperor. " You killed five thousand of us to seat yourself on the throne ; try and get a hundred thousand more of us put to death in the Crimea, and we give you a receipt in full."

As for myself, I was of course seized by the war contagion like the others. You don't remain long in a lazaret without catching some of the fever from the rest. Was it that I had ceased to sigh for peace and to think of Blanchette ? Oh no, but I was beginning to perceive the truth of what our Adjutant had said. " We can't expect the Emperor to let himself pass for a craven soul," I reasoned : " first let him prove that he is not afraid of war, and then we shall have peace ever after ; for the other nations will be wary of molesting him ? " It was a variation on M. de Guimauve's text, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*. It is true I was a little out at sea as to our reasons for assailing the Russians ; but this was a point of no importance. It's a soldier's duty to obey orders, not to ask questions.

I am sorry to say, though, that I failed in the endeavour to instil these views into Fourmiceau, who revealed a soul altogether unpatriotic at the news that he was about to start for the Euxine. In vain did I point out to him that we were going to avenge the treatment that his grandfather had suffered, and consolidate the throne of the Sultan of Turkey. He made use of disrespectful expressions towards his grandfather and wished the Sultan of Turkey in a city some latitudes south of Constantinople. There was no bringing him to his senses. He snivelled and whimpered in the most dismal way. " You promised me peace, Sergeant, and I wrote to Rose to wait for me. I shall never be able to do that again."

" Courage, Fourmiceau," I exclaimed ; " think of the promotion and the Crosses of Honour, man."

" Yes, there are plenty of Crosses of Honour," groaned Fourmiceau ; " but there's only one Rose Mignon. Rose is more to me than a million crosses."

What was I to say ? My own heart was not of the lightest. I had thought of running down just for a day and taking a parting look of

Blanchette, but on second consideration I deemed it was better to keep away. Would it have been kind to renew our friendship, when the first news she might hear of me after our parting was that some Russian had sent me to sleep for good and all in the Crimean snow? And yet, it seemed to me that I should at least like to thank M. de Guimauve for what he had done for Blanchette; I might not have another occasion; and you know, one goes less cheerfully to face death when there are debts of gratitude unpaid. However, an opportunity was given me.

I have said there were vast subscriptions organized for the war. They were of all sorts: some for the expenses of the war itself, some for the relief of the wounded, others for the distribution of creature-comforts to the troops. It so happened that on one of the committees of this last form of subscription our Deputy officiated: and on the morning of our departure from Paris he came with a bevy of gentlemen in kid gloves and ladies with tricolour rosettes to hand glasses of cognac (in France nothing is done without cognac: no cognac, no enthusiasm), Bologna sausages, packets of cigars, and mugs of Burgundy out of a fine spring-cart covered with flags. In the midst of the excitement occasioned by his appearance, I pushed my way up to him, and with emotion said, "Monsieur le Comte, I wish to thank you for your generous protection of a girl whose name I had mentioned to you; it is noble of you to befriend the child of a poor man as you have done."

He did not recognize me at first, for my Zouave dress altered me; but when he had scanned my features, and heard me pronounce the name of Blanchette, it struck me that he turned extraordinarily red.

"Monsieur le Comte, I, too, am but a poor man," I added; "but in some days I may be a dead man, and a dying man's blessing never did any harm. I hope you will allow me to shake hands with you."

At this I observed his redness change abruptly, and he became pale. I set it down to natural result of feeling. He gave me his hand, which was cold and shook somewhat, but his eyes did not face mine.

"You're a brave fellow," he stammered. "I—I—hope nothing will happen to you out there." He was evidently in a hurry to change the subject, for he turned round towards an officer in hussar uniform, who had come with him, and said: "This is my son—ahem—who is going out there, too. Raoul, here is one of our fellow-villagers. I trust if you have an opportunity of doing him a good turn you will not fail."

M. le Vicomte answered my salute quietly, and cordially shook hands with me, when I ejaculated: "I pray, mon Lieutenant, I may have an opportunity of proving that gratitude is not a vain word. If you are ever in danger, may I be next you to ward it off."

Not knowing what had passed between his father and me, I fancy he imagined the Count had been giving me a hundred-franc note; but as we Frenchmen are in the habit of offering to die for one another on slight incitation, my mode of tendering thanks would not appear to him particularly exaggerated.

To close the interview, the Count handed me a brimming glass of wine, and I drained it to the health of Blanchette.

I make no doubt you will dispense me from giving you account of the Crimean campaign. It has been described often enough already, and I question if my additional experiences would be likely to interest you. Let me only remark that all the glories of war, such as I had beheld them on a small scale at the sacking of Sidi-Ben's village, and again in the gutting of houses and sweeping of streets in Paris, in December '51, I had full opportunities of admiring again at Alma, Inkermann, the Tchernaya and the capture of Sebastopol. A battle is a fine thing. It is nothing more nor less than standing in close rows with not elbow-room enough, and firing at targets you are unable to see, whilst you are being mowed down in your turn by balls and bullets you are unable to avoid. But there are degrees in battles. A small battle is one where the fun lasts but half a day, and you lose only ten or fifteen thousand men—the population of a flourishing borough town; a good battle worth speaking about is one that keeps you on your legs (or off them) for twelve or sixteen hours, and in which the two sides between them part with some hundred thousand men—the population of a thriving manufacturing city. I say nothing of those petty skirmishes which take place at the outposts, and in which you lose no more than a couple of hundred men—just enough to found an Australian colony with. A true soldier learns to disregard these; he is even a little ashamed of himself when he gets knocked down in engagements so insignificant.

One of the beauties of war is that it prepares men for a good many of the civic virtues, by making them splendidly indifferent to the sight of slaughter. I suspect this has not a little to do with the little account we Frenchmen take of such episodes as those which inaugurated his Majesty's most happy reign. How, indeed, get up much sympathy for a few radicals swept into the gutter, when you have strode with unblenching eye, and your meerschaum pipe between your lips, over a field strewn as thickly with dead as a wood with fallen twigs after a hurricane? Thus public order is the gainer, and rulers who, in other countries less fortunate than ours, might hesitate to employ ball-cartridge to keep themselves in office, need never have such pusillanimous fears in France. If dead fall in our streets we have a Morgue to receive them.

I missed none of the Crimean campaign, reaching the seat of war amongst the first, and leaving it amongst the last. I thought, at starting, the whole affair would take six months; and during the long siege of Sebastopol, being confident every day that we should take the town on the morrow, I wrote but seldom home, preferring, when the time came, to carry all my news in person. So I did not hear much of Blanchette; in fact, I did not hear about her at all; for the letters that came to me from the old people at home, were all about me, as mothers' and fathers' letters are, and there was nothing said of Blanchette. Perhaps you will wonder why I did not ask them to break this silence, but we soldiers are

superstitious, and like better to trust to the saw that no news is good news. On bivouac nights, though, when those perishing Russian winds whistled keen and drove sleep away, more than once did I think of the patient little hands that were stitching in France, perhaps at the very moment I was musing on them. Blanchette, Blanchette, you lit up many a dark sky for me on bitter winter nights ; and on that day when we lit the bonfires in the camp, at the news that peace was declared, why did I colour like a schoolboy at the thought that there was nothing more now could stand between us two, since I was no longer a poor peasant, but a Captain, and a Knight of the Legion of Honour ?

For I must tell you I rose to a captaincy over the bodies of my fallen comrades. Promotion marches quickly in war time, especially in the Zouaves. We were generally in the thick of the fighting, whatever it was, and our officers fell by the half-dozen. The epaulet of sub-lieutenant came at Alma ; that of lieutenant at the Tchernia ; the captaincy arrived, by-and-by, in a kind of forlorn hope affair, in which I ought to have been blown into bits ; but somehow escaped. As for the cross, it was pinned to my coat after a small skirmish, one of twenty others in which men by the score, who did more than I, passed unnoticed. This is the fate of war. I had the luck to see lying on the ground an officer of hussars, who had just been dismounted, and, as the Vicomte de Champ-Guimauve was pretty often in my thoughts, I rushed forward to pick this officer up. Sure enough, it proved to be the viscount. I hoisted him on my shoulders, and returned with him to our lines, walking backwards, so as to guarantee him, to the best of my ability, from our friends the Russians in front. When, at last, I deposited him safely on the ground, I found five hundred of our men had stopped firing to clap their hands, and half-a-dozen hussar officers carried me off to the General of the Division (M. de Fracasse, our old Colonel), who threw his arms round my neck and gave me his own cross. It seemed to me that this was a great deal of fuss for nothing, for I had not got a scratch, and I was more than recompensed already, from having saved M. de Champ-Guimauve's life.

One evening in May '56, I was rolling along a very dusty road in a very shaky fly, on the box of which Fourmiceau, who had left an arm in the Crimea, and who had become my servant, was gesticulating with the one hand that remained to him. Never very expert at controlling his sentiments, Fourmiceau was on this occasion giving full career to his sensibility, and bedewing his honest cheeks with an emotion rather contagious. For the fact is, we were on our way to our village, which I had not seen since five years, and Fourmiceau since four, and Fourmiceau began to gesticulate at the precise moment when we came in sight of the first well-remembered cottage, around and opposite which the whole village were gathered to receive us. It seems we were heroes, for my old father and mother sobbed as if their hearts would break when I got out of the fly, and neither of them found strength to do anything but cling to me. Poor father ! His two brave old hands shook like in ague when they felt

my cross and epaulets ; they had never so played with baubles for sixty years. But mother was not looking at the epaulets : " Why are you carrying a crutch, my boy ; you never wrote to us that you were wounded ? " — " Bah, mother, it's nothing, it doesn't prevent me from walking." — " But—but, child, you can scarcely stand—you're crippled—they've been maiming you, those Russians have." — You see, I'm selfish—I'm speaking only about myself : but there was just the same scene with Fourmiceau.

Great glories of war, you leave fine hand-marks upon our villages. After father and mother our old fellow-villagers came clustering up around us,—that is, such of them as were living ; for where was sturdy Jacques, who guided his plough so straight, and Antoine, who sang so roundly at the village wakes, and Louis, who was our village champion at bowls ? There is the mother of Jacques, with her face pinched awry from weeping ; there the father of Antoine, pressing up to ask us whether his boy has a grave to himself in the cemetery at Balaclava ; and in yonder cottage lately lived the parents of Louis, but the cottage is empty now. When the old people received the black-bordered envelope it broke their hearts, and they're both dead !

But why linger on such episodes ? a day of return should be a day of joy. Some must die that others may conquer ; and if Jacques, Antoine, and Louis have lost their lives, surely it is for their country's—at least, for the Emperor's—sake, and no patriotic parent could wish them a better fate. I turn from the faces nearest me, most of which I own are care-worn, for it appears the taxes have been heavy this year ; and, as there were not hands enough to plough the fields, there is likely to be no harvest next August.—I turn from these faces and look around me for old Jean Poireau ; then, in a low voice, I ask for Blanchette. A feeling creeps over me that she must be somewhere in the crowd—hiding to see whether I would inquire for her, and prepared to come forward with her sweet eyes smiling, tearful, yet ready to gaze into mine with the same candid look of bygone days. I look around, and there is no Blanchette. But, perhaps, she is still away at Mauveville, in the place M. le Comte procured her, and her old father has gone to live with her ?

" Isn't that it, mother ; Blanchette is still at Mauveville ? "

" Oh, my boy ! " answers mother. " Is it of Blanchette you're speaking ? Why, Blanchette has become a great lady."

" A great lady, mother ? "

" Yes ; M. le Comte found her a place at Mauveville, but she's been gone from there these two years. Somebody else got her a place in Paris, and now she's very rich, and has her carriage, and wears golden bracelets."

" Then she's married ? " " I don't know, child ; perhaps she may be. But I hear she's a great actress at one of the Paris theatres, and earns showers of money." Just then Fourmiceau pulls my sleeve, looking very woe-begone and pale.

"I knew it would be so, Captain. Rose Mignon's gone. She's left the village for Paris, and nobody has any news of her."

"And these are not the only two," remarks our poor old Curé, with a sigh; "for the Conscription takes the village girls as well as the village lads."

## V.

Blanchette an actress—Blanchette ride in her carriage! And yet why not? We soldiers are no Puritans that we should think a woman lost because she performs on the boards of a theatre. We respect Art, and is not the stage one of the highest branches of art? Is it not a noble profession, and one which many of the purest and best of women have exercised? Why shouldn't my Blanchette be an actress?

I thought for a while I was going to be a cripple for life—my wound being a shell one, tiresome and long to heal. But I ended by pulling through, and when, after six months' nursing, I was strong enough to resume service, I set off for Paris with the intention of going to all the theatres one after another, and looking for Blanchette. I ought to mention, by-the-by, that I had ceased to be particularly enthusiastic in the cause of disarmament. At the end of the Russian campaign I had been drafted into the Zouaves of the Guard with a pay of 6,000 francs, and some of my views on military matters were much modified. I was beginning to understand that a great nation should not be niggardly with regard to its troops; and though far from decriing the advantages of peace, yet I deemed it incumbent upon every one to admit that war had its compensations. This is one of the most satisfactory results of having an immense standing army raised by forced conscription. The opinions of one half the men are at total variance with those of the other half, which prevents monotony. Those who have been dragged away from their fields, and remain privates on two sous a day, detest the service, groan for reductions, and are in favour of constant peace. On the contrary, those who, in war, have won epaulets—which they would never have acquired by planting turnips and ploughing corn-land, have the strongest objection to any change.

So I came to Paris. I had ascertained from our Mayor that Blanchette was not married. It is impossible to get married in France without the fact being known in one's village by the publication of banns, and there had been no banns published for Blanchette. I concluded she had been befriended by some great artist who had seen signs of talent in her; perhaps by some manager, who, in passing through Mauveville, had been struck by her beauty. I had read of such things in books. It is true, that at the time I knew her, Blanchette could do little more than just read and write, but there was nothing to prevent her having perfected her education after my departure. She might have had opportunities of study at Mauveville. Anyhow she had succeeded in obtaining an engage-

ment, and I was persuaded that all actresses were required to be well educated.

I had looked in vain for the name of Blanchette Poireau in all the newspapers and playbills, but that did not alarm me. Without quite understanding the practice, I was aware that French actresses seldom played under their real names, and there was nobody in our village who could enlighten me as to Blanchette's pseudonym. I began my tour of inspection by the Théâtre Français, where I went five nights running to see different pieces ; after that I tried the Odéon, then the Gymnase, then the Vaudeville—resorts of high-class comedy. After that I explored the Gaieté, Ambigu-Comique, and Porte Saint Martin—homes of melodrama and tragedy ; and one night I went to the Palais Royal, feeling very nervous the whole evening, for I should not have liked to find Blanchette there. It occurred to me that perhaps the villagers had made a mistake, and that Blanchette was a singer, not an actress. Her voice had always seemed sweet enough to me for any opera-house in the world. I put on a dress-coat and white gloves, and went night after night to the Grand Opera, the Opera Comique, and the Lyrique. My brother officers at mess said, "Brosse has gone music mad," and our Colonel hearing that I spent my evenings at the play, remarked that the whole of my pay would soon be swallowed up. He wrote to a brother of his who was connected with the Ministry of Fine Arts, and I received a packet of play-orders enough to carry me over a twelvemonth. The Government is extremely civil towards us officers of the Guard.

We were in March '57, and the Paris winter season was almost over. I had seen all the "successes" of the year until I was sick of them. The *Fiummina* of M. Mario Uchard, at the Français, haunted me like a nightmare. *Mathias l'Invalide*, of the Variétés, stalked after me like a ghost. *Les Marrons Glacés*, of the Palais Royal, had given me an indigestion ; and the tunes of the *Reine Topaze*, at the Lyrique, buzzed in my head and made solitude hideous. A good many of the principal actresses were leaving Paris to go starring in the provinces. All inquiries on my part had failed to elicit any information as to Blanchette's whereabouts, and I felt almost disposed to give up my chase until the next year, when, one day, our Colonel gave out that an Exalted Personage was going to the Théâtre des Fantaisies Gauloises that evening, and that I was to be on duty.

When certain Exalted Personages in our country go to the play, it is usual, in view of possible eventualities, to accommodate a score or so of soldiers with places in the gallery, a dozen detectives with seats in the pit, and five or six military officers with stalls. The officers are in plain clothes, but no objection is made if they have a fancy to take a revolver in their pockets. Accordingly, towards seven I made my appearance at the theatre, with an offensive weapon in the tails of my coat, but a demeanour and costume otherwise peaceable. With me went Fourniceau. He was still my servant, and had a few days before expressed a desire to go to the

theatre. I thought this a good opportunity of gratifying him, so he went into the pit.

The Théâtre des Fantaisies Gauloises is one of those devoted to a style of piece that came into fashion at about the same time as the establishment of the Second Empire. The burlesques and extravaganzas performed there would, in nine cases of ten, provoke adverse manifestations on the part of the audience in countries entitled respectable. But we Frenchmen are exempt from prejudice; we don't go in for respectability—which, of late years, we have held to be an insufferably slow virtue, unworthy of an intelligent people.

On the evening of my visit the playbill announced, *La Femme de mon Voisin*—a choice *lever de rideau*, in one act; and *Le Roi Candaule*, a musical burlesque in three acts.

This last was the *pièce de résistance*. It was a delightful composition, much in favour at that time with the golden youth of our capital, and the manager was making roaring receipts with it; thanks, no doubt, to two or three ladies who, attired in no more raiment than was necessary, played with abundant spirit in the principal parts. For myself, having no great taste for pieces of the *Roi Candaule* type, I had never been to the Fantaisies Gauloises before; and, finding that the Exalted Personage was not likely to arrive in his stage-box till eight, I sat down in the crush-room with a brother officer to take coffee and chat.

A general election was soon about to take place, and the papers contained hardly any but electoral news. We discussed the chances of the opposition, who, it seemed, were gathering all their strength to make a desperate effort in the contest. My brother Zouave was of opinion that an ideal Parliament was one such as we possessed at that moment. Not a single member of the Opposition; no publication of debates allowed; all the laws voted in strict privacy by two hundred Deputies, elected rather by the exertions of ninety Prefects than by that of ten million electors.—“With such a Parliament,” said he, “and a Senate to match, everything goes on swimmingly for us. No talk of reductions, no diminution of pay, and we get all the best places under Government.” He lit a cigarette, and added: “If any of these Opposition howlers get in there'll be a change of tune, you'll see. The haleyon days of the military will be over. Egad! I don't like those liberals: they produce the same effect upon me as stoats do. A lot of canting prigs, what do they mean by saying that the Second Empire is a reign of immorality? I don't find the Second Empire immoral; do you, Brosse?”

At that moment a waiter came and said: “I believe *he* has arrived, sir.” He was the Exalted Personage. I paid for the coffee, and my comrade and I hurried in to our places.

The E.P. had just taken his seat, and had got his double-barrelled glass already turned towards the stage. In the stalls there was something like a flutter of excitement amongst the spectators, who belonged to the Jockey Club or the Club of the Rue Royale, and who were on the look-

out for the "star" of the piece—a Mademoiselle Pomponnine, a débutante of not more than twelve months' standing, and whose peculiar talent, as I understood, lay in lifting her foot to a surprising height in performing our national dance. Mademoiselle Pomponnine was expected to appear in a moment or two; and, indeed, I had not been in my stall two minutes when an enthusiastic clapping of white-gloved hands by my immediate neighbours announced that she was coming.

Yes, there she came, and without more ado caught up the tune the fiddlers were playing, and launched into melody. But why did I—I, Aristide Brosse, bound as if shot at the same instant—why did I grip hold of the two arms of my stall, and stare before me like a fool? Why did two great drops of perspiration stream down my stupid face? Why did my comrade look at me and say: "Hallo, Brosse, are you ill; you're white as a sheet, man?" Why, in that flaunting, dazzling, spangled girl on the stage, who had not ten ounces of clothing upon her, whose arms and shoulders were covered with violet-powder, whose face was rouged, whose lips were smiling brazenly at the public, and whose sweet—utterably sweet—voice was trolling a song that made me, an old soldier, blush up to the roots of my hair?—I recognized—but I needn't tell you whom. I have never pronounced the name since.

I left the E. P. to take care of himself, started up and rushed out. I meant to go straight home, but in the lobby I was stopped by Fourmiceau, who had left the pit and was striding up and down, flourishing his one arm menacingly, and muttering interjections that appeared to dumbfound the waiters. On seeing me he rushed forward and stammered—"Ah, you saw her, didn't you, Captain?"

"Yes, Fourmiceau; but don't let's talk about it. Never speak on the subject to me again."

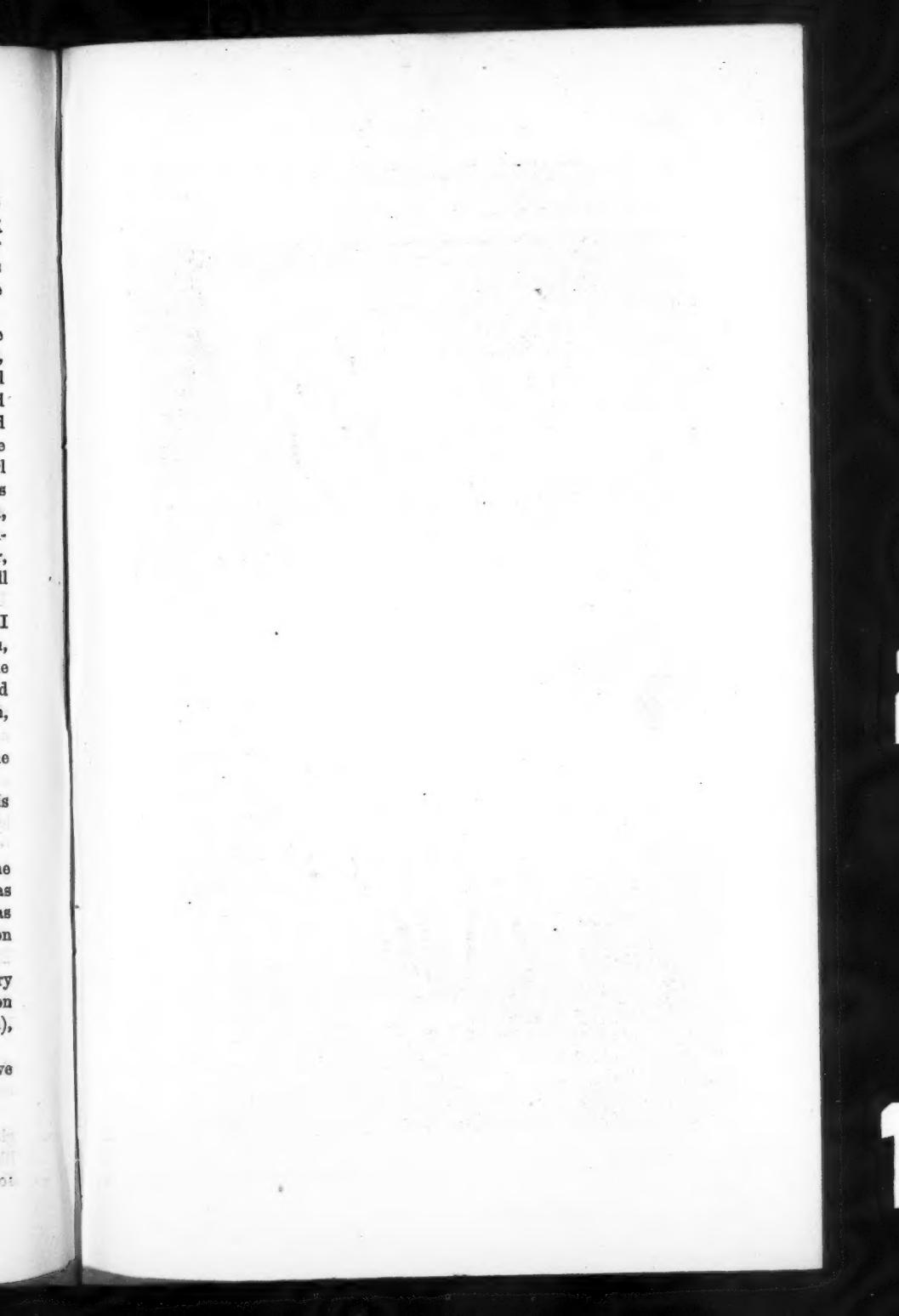
But he paid no attention to my words; he continued to wave his arm.

"Why, who are you talking about, Fourmiceau?"

He seized me by the cuff and dragged me to a box-door, through the bull's-eye of which we could see another private box opposite. It was occupied by two cavaliers with waxed moustaches, and by a lady who was dressed like a rainbow, and was staring about her with a self-possession altogether remarkable.

"That's Rose Mignon," hissed he. "Will you tell me now to cry *Vive la Conscription* and *Vive la Guerre?* What have the conscription and the war done for me? This" (and he touched his stump of an arm), "and that,"—and he pointed fiercely to Rose Mignon.

"Hush, Fourmiceau," I said. "Not so loud. There's a detective from the Rue de Jérusalem listening."





LUCY'S HEART WAS THROBBING IN PAINFUL SYMPATHY WITH HIM.

All the vapour and painted rays in homesicknesses no pleasure knowing of  
the old *antidumping* call of yesterday has quenched a day's bright  
heat and left melancholy coldness of other lands and such like  
griefs as this referred to the sun and the old system which itself  
and all its works Against Time.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.  
“SIC TRANSIT.”

OR the last time we assemble with the members of the fallen Company. A different gathering it was from the days when, blooded to gold, they gathered to listen to flattering tales, vote themselves dividends and bonuses, and cheer their Governor to the echo. A liquidator, with tongue dropping gall instead of honey, looked down on blank and black, instead of beaming faces. There were visages the last month or two had drawn out by inches like the india-rubber ones that change as you press them, from smiles to unutterable woe. There were pale cheeks and sunken eyes, quivering lips, and slovenly toilettes, and hands that trembled as they

fumbled with documents that had been officially circulated—one of them containing a general review of the situation, the other formally calling upon the contributors to show cause why they should refuse to listen to a *6l. call*. *Conticuere omnes, intentique ora tenebant*. In the suspense of the coming explanation, pregnant with his fate, no man felt much disposed to talk or even to grumble: the room was pervaded with the rustle of papers and a murmur that might have come from souls moaning in the dull pains of a distant purgatory.

On the elevated platform behind the liquidators, their solicitor, and a secretary detailed to read papers and minutes, sat a melancholy group of ex-Directors, unfortunates detached alike from the sympathies of one element and the other: like the flying fish, threatened at once by the monsters who gnashed on them with savage teeth from the swelling ocean below, and by the liquidators who hovered over their heads with calls and outstretched claws. There was Sir Ralph, the mere shadow of his former state; McAlpine grave and anxious; and Rushbrook alone,



to outward seeming, as unconcerned as ever, twisting the paper in his fingers into a foolscap, and suggesting to the unappreciative Schwartzchild that he should move its adoption by the meeting. And there sat Hugh Childersleigh, his expression not out of keeping with the deep mourning he wore, yet looking round with clear steady eye that bore down, in spite of them, the angry glances it encountered from all sides.

Mr. Auditt broke ground with the accustomed phrases of regret, as obligatory on similar occasions as her Majesty's health at a public dinner. No one could deplore more sincerely than he the calamity that brought them together ;—he had a confident hope of netting by it, from first to last, some 30,000*l.* Yet he trusted they would find elements of comfort in the case, to soften a blow that must fall heavily at best, and he should have been cheered indeed when first taken into their melancholy confidence, could he have hoped the state of things he had a certain satisfaction in reporting, would have been half so favourable. In the first place, he had the pleasure of informing them, that a member of their body and a fellow-sufferer, who, it appeared, laboured under the additional misfortune of being related by ties of blood to their absconded Manager (yells, howls, and groans of execration),—that this gentleman had exerted himself, and exerted himself successfully, to recover much of the abstracted property. Moreover, independent of its very considerable actual value, that recovery had enabled him to form a tolerably reliable estimate of their prospects. In making it, he had been naturally led to examine cursorily into their prospective assets. Here he was happy to have it in his power to pay a high tribute to the late management. He could assure the meeting that advances, generally, seemed to have been made with excellent judgment and on ample security. What most unfortunately compromised them, was the wreck of those subsidiary companies they had promoted, and, on the other hand, it was the ruin of the parent which had involved its progeny in the common misfortune. It might, in one way, add a poignancy to natural regrets ; but in justice to their late Directors, and in elucidation of their present position, he was bound to tell them that the collapse could only be attributed to that abnormal condition of the commercial atmosphere which had made all credit unsubstantial as vapour, coupled with that most unfortunate quarter in which they had reposed their confidence — he alluded, of course, to their defaulting Manager (Cries of "The Governor too," "No, no," "Yes, yes," "Shame," "Go on :" —through which our friend Hugh, although his cheek might have flushed and his brow darkened, sat otherwise as unmoved as if his late worshippers had still been vociferating his praises).

After a most elaborate condescension on facts and figures, Mr. Auditt approached the engrossing question of the call. It had been the opinion of his colleagues and himself that a call was imperative ; that it was eminently advisable, moreover, in the interests of the shareholders themselves, as the only means of avoiding a wholesale sacrifice of assets which, with time and care, might realize the full value they stood for in the

Company's books. He need hardly say it had been their earnest desire to press as lightly on the contributories as practicable, but mature deliberation had forced them to the conclusion that 6*l.* per share was the lowest figure which would meet the exigencies of the occasion. If payments were prompt and general, he would venture to hazard a personal opinion—it must be distinctly understood he committed himself to nothing further—that the shareholders might dismiss from their minds any apprehensions of further liability.

Mr. Auditt resuming his seat was the signal for a score of excited orators bounding to their feet. For three-quarters of an hour there was nothing but abuse, lamentation, and recrimination, varied by questions where the general ignorance of business evinced by the querists was only surpassed by the special innocence of facts exhibited by the professional respondents. At last Lord Rushbrook seized the ears of the meeting. His lordship reminded them that on the last occasion on which he had had the honour of addressing them, he had failed in an attempt to persuade them that a motion urged by a reverend gentleman,—he was happy to see him present,—had been ill-advised and wholly uncalled for. He believed, in fact, he had even ventured to denounce it as a gross and gratuitous insult to his near relative, their late Governor, who, he was glad to say, was also with them upon this occasion to speak for himself. The motion of submitting the conduct, and consequent liability, of Mr. Childersleigh for the opinion of counsel had been carried, and it would be satisfactory to himself, and doubtless to the shareholders, to learn its result from the reverend gentleman, who had been chairman of the committee he had moved for. If that opinion were of the tenor he had been given to understand it was, he was quite sure no one would rejoice more at the opportunity of proclaiming it than the reverend gentleman himself. Dr. Silke Reynardson's own professions must have convinced them that, next to Mr. Childersleigh and Mr. Childersleigh's immediate friends, he had suffered more intensely than any one from the language only an imperative sense of duty could have driven him to employ, and that he would feel a pleasure equally intense in availing himself of this public opportunity of retracting it.

If Dr. Reynardson felt the pleasure his lordship credited him with, he must have had his countenance in better command than his tongue; certainly none of the numerous gentlemen who turned to regard him suspected anything of it. Amid shouts of "Hear, hear!" "Reynardson!" "Dr. Reynardson!" he deliberately raised himself to his legs. Although the Doctor had an impetuous—not to say evil—temper, one which had been so constant a snare to him, that at last he had come to let it trip him up when it pleased with the passive resignation of a martyr, yet he was largely gifted with intelligence and common sense. He was conscious his philippic on the former occasion had hurt himself much more than Childersleigh, and, so far, he sincerely regretted it. Besides, no man had a more religious respect for dignitaries, and he repented having

invited the thrusts and enmity of a man in the position of Rushbrook. But, then, he had seen the fruits of a lifetime consecrated to sacred eloquence and good works, all swamped in the Crédit Foncier, and he was profoundly moved against those who had robbed him of his painfully-garnered stores. So it was with curiously blended feelings he rose to address the meeting ; a straw would have turned the torrent of his words one way or the other. He laboured, moreover, under a sense of awkwardness, from which lashing himself into a passion appeared the readiest means of extrication. Standing in that shattered temple of Mammon, the sinner was in the ascendant for the time, and the chances were he would sorely buffet the saint, and leave him with ample matter for repentance.

His lordship only did him justice, said Dr. Reynardson, in giving him credit for having suffered more keenly than any of his listeners while he discharged the most painful duty he had ever been driven to. Whereupon even Childersleigh smiled, while as for Rushbrook, when he composed himself comfortably for the expected treat, his face expressed appreciation, amounting to enjoyment. Other gentlemen looked or whispered in a similar sense; and Dr. Reynardson, feeling that in his nobler nature he had soared high above the sympathies of his audience, came tumbling back to the earth, and cast himself savagely into the clutches of the powers of passion and evil.

But his lordship was egregiously in error, he proceeded, in assuming it to be his desire or intention to retract one word he had uttered then. His words had been too conscientiously weighed to be lightly withdrawn. On a single point he had erred, and he was not ashamed to confess it. He was a clergyman, and no lawyer, untrained to split hairs and catch at words, to sever equity from justice, and separate the laws of conscience and morals from those of St. Stephen's and the statute-book. It was his desire to revere the law and respect its interpreters, and he had fondly trusted that for flagrant wrong the law had fitting remedy. That illusion was dispelled. In the interest of the widow and the orphan, of the desolate hearth and the shivered roof-tree, he had urged that Mr. Childersleigh's clear moral responsibility—ay, he repeated it boldly to his face, as he had said it honestly behind his back—that Mr. Childersleigh's moral liability should be enforced by the machinery of justice. If that machinery were not radically defective, it had lamentably broken down. The counsel they had consulted—eminent, he believed, they were considered—had given it as their opinion that the late Governor, sheltered behind a rampart of technicalities, might enjoy as best he could the riches he had filched.

" May I ask the rev. gentleman if he quotes the precise language of the opinion ? " interposed Rushbrook. " Or if it is brief, as I am given to understand it is, perhaps he will forgive me if I request him to read it."

The rev. gentleman seemed strangely loth to gratify this reasonable request, but the feeling of the meeting was unmistakable. The opinion, signed by her Majesty's Solicitor-General and a learned brother, was clear and concise : " On the statement submitted, we are of opinion that no action whatever can lie against Mr. Childersleigh."

"I have to apologize sincerely for having troubled the rev. gentleman," resumed Lord Rushbrook, blandly ; " his singularly candid rendering of the sense and scope of the document in question ought to have satisfied me."

"To return to where I broke off when the noble lord interrupted me," resumed Dr. Reynardson in some confusion, and with a look of poison. "I was referring to the wealth his honourable relative, the Chairman, had gathered in our service, I will not say from our pockets, although the system of commission by which he enriched himself seems to me little better than legalized pilfering. I am satisfied to waive all allusion to the colourable suspicions engendered by his close friendship with our worthy Manager, although they are entertained, as I have reason to know, by many of the most intelligent of our body. I will content myself with asking whether your verdict endorses that of the lawyers,—whether it argues unblemished honour, or does not rather imply some slight degree of moral turpitude, when a man founds a Company like this, courts public confidence to it by representations strangely belied by results, transforms himself in two brief years from a pauper to a millionaire, and finally slips like a rat from the house he has too good reason to know is falling. Gentlemen, it would appear that we cannot drag our Governor to the bar of justice, or invoke the civil power to compel him to the surrender of his gains. Yet something we can do—we can force him before that tribunal of social opinion, which holds the issues of life or death for men like him. We can poison the enjoyment of the wealth which has been to him swelled by the mites of the widow, steeped in the tears of the orphan; and I, for one, solemnly pledge myself to uplift my humble testimony in my lowly sphere until trials and sorrows shall stifle my feeble accents."

In one way or another, the clergyman's burning peroration brought down the house. There were indignant utterances indeed, but they were rare, and while a good many of his auditors sat silent and doubtful, a great number applauded vociferously. Some of the more sensitive had dissolved in tears, and regarded Rushbrook, who was evidently in a most enviable state of enjoyment, as a mocking Mephistopheles.

Dr. Reynardson had thrown down the glove, and Hugh hastened to take it up. The violent personal attack had given him the opportunity for personal explanation ; he felt his advantage and meant to use it. The champion of the sufferers had hit hard, yet the spirit of fair-play was general enough to assure him a more patient hearing than he could otherwise have hoped for, and the mass of the audience forgot, for a moment, the disagreeables of their situation in the interest always excited by a fair stand-up fight. As Hugh rose before him, with head slightly thrown back, and kindling eye that swept the room, the Doctor was troubled by some inward qualms, and glanced uneasily from the Governor to the reporters. He knew he had laid himself terribly open.

So far as his fears went of having violence met with violence, and personalities retorted with personal sarcasm, he might have spared them,

If Hugh was tempted he refrained, although his reply was perhaps none the less telling for its studied moderation. Lightly touching on the tone, he thanked his assailant with dignity for the matter of the remarks which gave him an opening he had ardently longed for; which cheered him with the hope of freeing his mind from the weight which had long oppressed it. He had laboured hard to deserve their good opinion, and the feeling that he had lost it, however innocently, had been, he owned to them, very painful. He had suffered deeply from the knowledge that his profound sympathy with their misfortunes was suspected, that there were circumstances that gave some faint colour to the dishonouring accusations that had been launched at him. Of these, Dr. Reynardson had no doubt conscientiously made himself the exponent, and he repeated he had reason to be grateful to him. The expressions of dissent elicited by so many passages of Dr. Reynardson's speech had assured him he could still count on friends among those he had the pleasure of knowing neither by sight nor name; that there were members of their body who still refused to believe he would lightly stain a stainless name or belie the conduct of a lifetime. In consenting to defend himself he felt something of the humiliation of pleading guilty, but he would pray of them to suspend, as a body, the judgment some of them might have hastily passed; to strive to imagine that the relation which had once existed between them was yet unchanged, to let him believe them still his friends, while he addressed them with perfect candour. If they condemned him when they had heard him to an end, he could not say he would bow to their sentence, but, acquitted by his conscience, he would bear it as best he might.

He would ask them, to begin with, was there a conceivable motive for his risking himself in questionable transactions? He had made a large fortune by their Company; he was wealthy still; and, as he was unbosoming himself, he would tell them he could look forward with reasonable certainty to inheriting a great succession in a few weeks' time. (Here there was a general murmur, and even Hugh's friends looked blank. He had been candid with a vengeance, and now actually touched on the very point that had stirred the bitterest animosity.) "I have alluded advisedly to the subject of the money I have gained by you, and intend, with your permission, to return to it; in the meantime let me defend the means by which I have made and kept it."

Then he took up charge after charge with a detail into which we shall not follow him; but, although he spoke not unsuccessfully to their reason, their hearts were effectually closed to him by the wealth he acknowledged to have saved from the common wreck.

He went on: "You have discovered, gentlemen, that the system of remuneration by commission was a mistake, and my share of it an exorbitant one. Possibly; yet let me remind you that it was you who ratified the one and the other, and let me assure you, laying my hand on my heart, that self-interest, if I know myself, never influenced me in any of the transactions I arranged on your behalf. The highest legal

authorities have told you in the plainest terms, that what I have gained I gained honestly." (Murmurs, and expressions of dissent.) "Gentlemen, I claim a patient hearing as a right, and I am assured you will not deny it. They have decided it was gained honestly, and for myself I will venture to add, honourably as well. In brief, gentlemen, the sole points on which I am disposed to reproach myself arise from my connection with our defaulting Manager. That connection, from first to last, was a purely business one. Yet, while I distinctly repudiate any responsibility for that unhappy man, I do feel that in the eyes of the public our connection may well have appeared closer than it was; that such reputation as I possessed may have plausibly been made to stand guarantee for his. Latterly, indeed, I had to a certain extent withdrawn my confidence from him, and done my best to limit his exercise of power; but in that, I must add, I was guided merely by suspicion which might well have been prejudice, and I was in possession of no tangible facts which would have justified me in bringing the matter officially before your Board. Still, enlightened after the events and after the unfortunate chances which prolonged my absence, and although a Chairman, with an able body of coadjutors and an efficient staff of subordinates, might well consider a few days of relaxation fairly earned by months of painfully assiduous application; still, I say, enlightened after the event, I shall never cease to reproach myself with that absence as the indirect cause of the ruin of a noble business. Upon my heart and conscience that I hold to be the head and front of my offending, and for that I stand here willing to make the extreme compensation the law could have exacted of me had I been criminal ten times over. I cannot absolutely promise to spare you entirely the painful necessity of a call, for my means may be scarcely equal to my will. But what I can do I will, and I intimate my intention of sealing my unwavering devotion to your interests by an immediate transfer to your liquidators of my entire property, real and personal. With the exception of family pictures, and a few heirlooms I shall beg permission to select, I pledge myself the cession shall be absolute. And now, gentlemen, may I express a hope that we part on terms at least as friendly as those on which we began our unfortunate acquaintance, and may I take leave of the Crédit Foncier in the belief that I have convinced you of the integrity of my conduct and the purity of my motives?"

So thoroughly was the meeting stunned by the startling climax of the Governor's speech that, for a space, they sat gaping on him and each other open-mouthed, as if questioning whether their ears had played them false. Then their feelings vented themselves in Protean variety of form. There was cheering and waving of hats, pounding of feet and umbrella-ferules, weeping, blessing, praying, and swearing that the Governor was something greater than the divinity they had always taken him for. The peroration of Hugh's speech was well worth that of Dr. Reynardson. Some of the more suspicious and saturnine shook their heads; they would greatly

like to see the deeds executed that should give effect to the eloquent orator's intentions ; to be persuaded of the existence of the property he so generously transferred ; and although his speech had otherwise sounded rational enough, they were much inclined to share Lord Hestercombe's doubts as to his sanity. Rushbrook and McAlpine seized him by either arm and dimmed remonstrances into his ears. " Too late, altogether too late, my good fellows," was the reply ; " and don't forget I gave you an opportunity of arguing me out of my intention."

" A wilful man will have his way," moaned McAlpine, feeling he might just as well attempt to move the pillar behind him, and acknowledging, moreover, that Hugh was irretrievably committed by his speech. " But you must let your friends do what they can for you in spite of yourself ; " and with that he sprang to his feet and addressed a stirring appeal to the meeting. Mr. Childersleigh had taken a course of absolutely unparalleled generosity, and beggared himself—yes, beggared himself—in obedience to the dictates of an over-sensitive honour, and, in answer to reproaches which his conscience told him were utterly unjust. Were they to take a paltry advantage of him, and clutch at the uttermost farthing he offered ? He pled earnestly for the old place that had been in the Childersleigh family for centuries. Mortgaged as it was, the difference would be little to them although immense to its owner ; and he concluded with a motion that it, at least, should be left him. Hugh would have risen again, but his friends almost angrily insisted he was out of court in the matter, and literally forced him to keep his seat—perhaps not sorry at heart to think he might be spared the worst of the sacrifice.

But Dr. Silke Reynardson stood before them again. With heartfelt satisfaction he had listened to the speech of a man he was proud again to entitle his honourable friend, and, imitating Mr. Childersleigh's frankness, he begged to retract every word that, under erroneous impressions, he had felt it his duty to utter to his disparagement. As they had seen in the generous nobility of his nature, Mr. Childersleigh had been obviously eager to disclaim the well-intentioned but—he would say it—the most ill-advised interference of his colleague, Mr. McAlpine. He would venture to interpret Mr. Childersleigh's mind, and implore of them, in Mr. Childersleigh's name, not to dim the lustre of a grand sacrifice. Mr. Childersleigh had freely offered them his family place, and for Mr. Childersleigh's own sake, he would entreat of them as freely to accept it. (Cries of " No, no,"—" hear, hear.") He was sure they could not mis-judge his motives, and he would recall to them the statement of Mr. McAlpine that the estate was so heavily burdened as to reduce its value to a minimum—a reason the more, he must remark in passing, for hesitating to impose on Mr. Childersleigh the costly burden of maintaining it. (Expressions of dissent and disapprobation.) But one other word, and he had done. If he were rightly informed of circumstances only known to him by hearsay, Mr. Childersleigh might be entitled in a few weeks to claim a valuable property upon certain conditions. Might he

put it to Mr. Childersleigh whether, in the interest of the shareholders, he would not see it his duty to make good his claim to that property previous to executing to them a transfer of the whole ? (An emphatic " No " from Mr. Childersleigh). Then he would not press that delicate point, but he would conclude with an amendment to Mr. McAlpine's motion—" That this meeting accept with cordial gratitude the liberal proposal of their late Governor, and desire to enter on their minutes an expression of their profound esteem for his character and conduct."

Rushbrook was whetting the razors of his sarcasm when McAlpine stopped him.

" Trust me, the best way of disposing of that is to leave it to the vote ; better they should condemn that scoundrel Reynardson than you. I see, Budger seconds him—and just like him ; but they'll scarcely find a third man to go along with them."

The worthy chieftain had hardly calculated on the feelings of impoverished shareholders dreading a farther drain on their pockets, voting practically anonymously *en bloc*, and encouraging themselves by mutual example and kindred sentiment. The show of hands was clearly in favour of the amendment, as the liquidator reluctantly announced. McAlpine impetuously demanded a vote, but there Childersleigh insisted on interfering. He regretted much the proposal had ever been suggested to the meeting—at least, he would not stoop to have it pressed on them.

" What did I say to you about pearls and swine ? " exclaimed Rushbrook, as they left together. " Oh, Hugh, Hugh ! are you not ashamed of your selfish avarice in sticking by your family pictures ? They deserve everything you can give them, poor grateful souls ! Well, you are a maniac, assuredly ; but I will say you're a fine fellow all the same."

McAlpine said nothing at all. To his practical common sense the action seemed even more portentously absurd than to the more reckless Rushbrook.

As to Hugh, with a strange mixture of melancholy and content, keenly alive to all he had given up, and still wavering in faith as to what it might do for him, he drove off to the society of Lucy.

Next morning he woke with the world before him, but with the companion he had secured for the journey, he almost enjoyed the prospect of his coming travails. " I had hoped to have seen her rich, but at least I can make her happy, and, as for a competency, fair play and a few years will give her that. Perhaps, who knows, we may build a Childersleigh elsewhere, carry our Laree with us, and hang the pictures of the Childersleighs on other walls." And like a hound rousing himself for the chase, he stretched and shook himself mentally in the glad consciousness of his strength, and only longed to be slipped on the work. " In the last few weeks I have found some friends I shall be sorry to part from," he went on to himself ; " but after all, I suppose it is in the nature of things that love should swallow friendship. I take my world where I go, even if friends and Childersleigh remain behind."

He had seated himself at breakfast, when the door was thrown open and Mr. Barrington announced. Mr. Barrington came forward with both hands extended, and took Hugh's cordially in his own. "I came here twice last night to no purpose, so I determined to make sure of you this morning. Well, you look pretty comfortable, I must say; the events of yesterday don't seem to have put you much out."

"Why should they? If you may have to rough it soon on half rations, it is surely a reason for making yourself comfortable while you may. So you have heard of the folly I perpetrated."

"Heard of it! I should think so, indeed. The world has been talking of nothing else. For the matter of that, there are leaders on you in half the morning papers; so my man told me while I was dressing; and what else do you imagine brought me here at this hour?"

"I can't say. It would have been an excellent reason for most people staying away."

"You don't mean that for me, Childersleigh?" asked Barrington, reproachfully.

"Of course not," returned Hugh, hastily; "as I may very soon take means of proving to you. God knows I ought to have learned to understand you by this time. But what are they saying about me?—not that it much signifies."

"Pat you on the back without an exception. I do believe you are more the fashion than ever. One would fancy all the world capable of doing the same thing, your generosity is so universally appreciated. I don't so much wonder at my chiming in with the rest, for you spoiled me for life when you saved me with that good deed of yours at Homberg."

"An old story now, and little worth repeating at best."

"I, at least, am never likely to forget it, although it is not much in my way to talk of things of the kind. But I tell you, Hugh, when this latest one gets from the clubs to the drawing-room, when the women hear it from the men, you will be positively the rage. If your arrangements had not been made elsewhere, you might have picked and chosen among heiresses."

"I've done with drawing-rooms, and if my arrangements had been still to make, my crotchetts would never have awoke the enthusiasm of the fair sex. What I gave up to the Crédit Foncier yesterday was really my wedding present to my wife, made at her own request."

"She is a girl in a thousand, I do believe, and, upon my word, when all is said and done, I'm almost inclined to call you a lucky man. Evil communications, you know, and assuredly you must have demoralized me. But we have discussed our money matters before now, Hugh; and you will forgive my asking how you mean to live."

"A question I have asked myself often, you may be quite sure. Perhaps it would have been more strictly just had I shown yesterday less of what people call generosity. But if I had kept anything back, charit-

able tongues would have swelled tens to thousands ; and I fear, as far as my good name went, the sacrifice would have been thrown away. I desired to crush not cripple the wasps that were stinging me."

" Yes, you showed your usual good sense there, even when for once you did a foolish thing; and then, doubtless, you remembered—I should be greatly cut up if you had not—that George Barrington was rich, and his fortune as much yours as his—eh, Hugh ? "

" Not exactly that, Barrington ; but I assure you I felt I had friends I could count upon, and I neither contemplated giving up Lucy nor marrying her to starvation. I would sooner come to you and Rushbrook for a thousand or two, than leave my honour at the mercy of the men I parted from yesterday for ever. Nor should I borrow quite as a beggar after all; my Holbeins and Vandykes mean the thousand or two, and something more—a security to my friends, while I live—a provision for my wife if I die."

" Upon my word, Childersleigh, for a man capable of such romantic actions, you have the queerest ideas of friendship. Had that loan you forced on me at Homburg escaped your memory altogether, and the language with which you pressed it ? Unless you mean our friendship to die a sudden death—and then the murder lie at your door, I wash my hands of it—unless you mean that, I say, pledge yourself forthwith to come to me, and to no one else. Very likely Rushbrook would be glad enough, but then Rushbrook is always hard up, and would probably have to borrow. Now, thanks to you, I have a balance at my banker's I don't know how to invest, and I owe you that and a great deal more. And one thing more I have to say—when you do come to bank with me, it shall be on condition you give yourself a fair chance, and don't spoil this new voyage of yours by starving the stores. For Miss Winter's sake you must act liberally by me. But of course you will. You can't seriously mean to hurt my feelings. Come, Hugh, say it's a bargain, and offer me some breakfast; for let me tell you it is no light proof of friendship, turning out at this most unchristian hour."

" On my word, Barrington, it's almost worth losing a fortune to find such friends," exclaimed Hugh, stretching out his hand.

" I'm not quite so sure about that. At least, for my own part, I should rather make the discovery cheaper," returned Barrington ; " but now that matter is disposed of, I'll trouble you for a cup of coffee."

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#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

#### MARRIAGE, LOVE, AND LEAVE-TAKING.

AFTER his violent divorce from all that had engrossed him in the most eventful years of his life ; after his return from the City, infinitely more naked than he had entered it ; after the wrench that tore his heartstrings

from the remains of his paternal acres, Hugh had looked for consolation with Lucy. He was married now, and had seated himself by a domestic hearth, when it was become matter of grave speculation how he was to keep in the fire. He had no idea of hanging on in his altered circumstances to shiver through an English winter of discontent. He found his susceptibilities jar him at each step he took, for after all he was a mere mortal, and not a hero of romance. The people he had lived with had plied him with insidious flattery, yielding him insensible deference as to a consummate man of their world. It fretted his philosophy to find himself regarded distrustfully as a brilliant maniac, whose eccentricities it was impossible to count on; as a vagrant from exalted spheres, of essence too refined for earth, hurried along by caprice or conscience in most erratic orbits. He had moods when the old leaven fermented, and he sneered at himself from force of habit, as at a child rapt up in its latest toy while all around it went to wrack and ruin. But these moods were few and brief. Generally he recognized that it was only now he had gained firm standing-ground for an earnest start. If his present position were embarrassing, he was but paying the inevitable penalty of early errors.

He had found but little difficulty in wooing Lucy to an early wedding-day. Never had courtship been more flattering, for each word and act of her lover's told her he left his fate and happiness in her hands. She had turned the current of his life, and stirred his nature to its depths. He had proved the strength of their sympathies, by submitting his convictions to her influences, and deliberately laying his most cherished project at her feet. Of course when Hugh decided to sacrifice wealth and ambition, Lucy went into scarcely smothered transports over their narrow means and doubtful future. The haze that hung over their destinies was the choicest sweet in the cup that Providence was filling to the brim.

The wedding had been as private as might be. The Childersleighs, the Hestercombes, McAlpine, and Barrington,—the guests. The sombre dress and subdued demeanour of those who stood nearest to the bride were not inappropriate to the crowning of a love whose course had flowed by shoals and shocks,—the better omen, as Hugh whispered to his bride, that the broken waters would run smooth at last.

Worn in mind and body, Sir Basil was there to give the bride away. The quivering lip and starting tear showed how keenly he felt the parting. As Lucy's eyes filled in sympathy, she would have reproached herself for her desertion, but when she looked on her husband, she remembered the claims he had bought so dearly. Sir Basil would have made handsome provision for one he had come to cherish as a daughter, but Hugh would hear nothing of it. He was hopeful of a speedy competency, and, in the passion of his independence, shrunk from laying himself or his wife under unnecessary obligations. Perhaps he might have thought it graceful to admit Sir Basil's paternal claims, and let him act in the matter as he pleased. But he had reason to know that "Childersleighs" had felt the panic; and Purkiss, who had been beggared by it, so far as his private

means went, took care to put his father's proposals in so pleasant a light, that acceptance became out of the question. It was but too easy to parry them, for Sir Basil's mind had been weakened past insistence on anything. At Maude's instigation, he was content to vent his affection characteristically in a long series of cheques; and Mrs. Childersleigh's trousseau was much better suited to her position as her position might have been, than as it was.

Lord Hestercombe's first movement had been indignation at the crowning folly which had sealed the surrender of Childersleigh by marriage with a beggar, when an heiress had become indispensable. But second thoughts, and the practical logic of Rushbrook, had brought his lordship to regard his nephew's conduct from a more chivalrous point of view. He dared not counsel the man who had given up all to honour to break his plighted word, because it was passed to a penniless orphan. That position once taken up, he behaved with cordiality and delicacy, and claimed the right of a near relative to act with the magnificence of a grand seigneur. His daughter volunteered to be twin-bridesmaid with Maude. The jewels presented by himself and the countess were so priceless, so sparklingly unsuited to the wife of an emigrant, that they ruffled Hugh's over-sensitive susceptibilities. He could regard them as nothing but an alms bestowed on the destitute.

For Mr. and Mrs. Childersleigh proposed to reconstruct their fortunes in Queensland. The Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer *Tanjore* was to sail from Southampton on September 28th—as it chanced, the very morrow of the day appointed for the opening of THE WILL. Before they sailed, if they cared to hear it, they would learn the destiny of the money that had been Hugh's first love and Lucy's rival.

Hugh had been thoroughly off with that old love before taking up with the new one. With the property he had lately called his own, he had shifted his business cares on to the shoulders of the liquidators of the Crédit Foncier. Anticipating abdication, he had made over to Mr. Rivington the house in Harley Street. He had carried his bride to honeymoon in one of those old-fashioned hostleries that still shelter in wooded nooks by the banks of the Thames, peaceful and rural still, in spite of excursionists by rail, and the rowing rowdyism of the river. An hostelry with deep thatched eaves, quaint casements, and eccentric gables, close-clipped hedges, and short-shaven lawns ablaze with scarlet geraniums. Thence he made those dashes to the City in search of an emigrant's paraphernalia, that sent him back with redoubled zest to their Arcadia, to their strolls through furze and heather, and their saunters in fragrant woodlands; to the lazy paddling up long reaches of the river, and the floating back in a golden haze of love and dreams.

One thing weighed upon him, and that was the inevitable farewell to Childersleigh. There the past seemed to have buried its dead out of sight, and he shrank from wakening slumbering memory with her thousand stings. But there are bitter duties that are pleasures in their way, and

leave-takings it would be sacrilegious to neglect ; and one bright morning saw Mr. and Mrs. Childersleigh on the garden-terrace by the old yew hedge.

On just such a morning by that very path he had approached his home the memorable day of the funeral. Then, for the first time, he had looked on his place as really his own, now it was gone from him for ever ; all the interest he reserved in it was vain regrets and melancholy associations. The house, with its down-drawn blinds, seemed in mourning now as then, and its cheerless face was reflecting the depression on its late master's. The unlucky Marxby had passed with the multitude into the insolvent court. Pressed by shareholders eager to escape a call, the liquidators had forced the sale, and Childersleigh had been knocked down to a West End solicitor at the very moderate upset price—given him in a gift, that gentleman triumphantly observed, when the bargain was fairly closed. In the fulness of his self-gratulation he had made an off-hand offer to take furniture, fittings, &c., at a reasonable valuation, an offer promptly closed with for reasons akin to those that had sacrificed the place.

Patterson, warned beforehand, was in waiting to do the dismal honours, with a heart in sad harmony with the occasion, and a visage more melancholy than Childersleigh's own. The old man had no love-dreams to comfort him in his sorrow, and although the new purchaser had assured him his services would not be dispensed with, the light of his life seemed to be going out in darkness. His garrulousness was hushed, and inclination as much as natural delicacy kept him in the background. A self-posted patrol, he hovered round his master in the distance, to see that no profane stranger intruded on the leave-taking.

What a heaven earth would be could we always appreciate all we have as keenly as we do when on the point of losing it. Childersleigh Park lay flooded in the mellow lights of late summer. The scent-laden breeze breathing from the flowers was stirring the masses of foliage in waving lines of beauty ; the shadows of golden boughs were dancing on the turf below to the drowsy hum of the bees. Everything animate and inanimate seemed so thoroughly at home in the enjoyment of its existence, from the sheep that grouped themselves lazily in the elm-shade to the jackdaws that clamoured among the fantastic stacks of chimneys. Hugh envied the very swallows that dipped in the rippling water. They were going abroad like him, but, unlike him, they at least would be there again the succeeding summer.

It was a relief to take refuge from the laughing beauty without doors, in the black hall and long dark-panelled corridors where the sunlight filtered so dimly through stained window-panes or heavy blinds. But as his eyes accustomed themselves to the obscurity, they lighted at every turn on objects that riveted them with painful fascination. Not a table nor chair, but had its story to tell ; claims of its own to put in for a parting pang. Remembering he looked his last on them all, in room after room, he stood lingering upon the threshold.

Her eyes timidly following her husband's, guiltily avoiding them when they turned her way, Lucy's heart was throbbing in painful sympathy with his. The crowding sensations that were grief to him were anguish to her. While all her being seemed unnaturally absorbed in his, for the first time since their marriage he moved utterly unconscious of her presence, and to the jealousy of her love the first shadow of a cloud seemed settling between them. Her self-reproach told her that in Childersleigh he might well feel resentfully to her, and for the moment she would have given the world to have recalled the past and influenced him differently. What right had she to set her childish impulses in opposition to the counsels of his sagest friends. She rested her trembling fingers in mute appeal on his arm. As he turned at the touch her doubts vanished, but only to leave her more bitterly self-reproachful than before.

"Forgive me, Hugh; but, indeed, I fancied I had guessed the sacrifices I longed to share with you."

"I swear to you, darling, much as I feel them, I never regretted them less than now. While I am tasting the bitters of your teachings, I know that the sweets are all to come. It might have been the other way, but what then? Better to go to honourable exile than live on here in ceaseless remorse—or, worse still, dishonourable unconsciousness. And then," he said, with an unclouded smile as he took her in his arms, "you can't have everything in this world; and, heaven knows, although we leave Childersleigh behind, I carry with me more than my share of Paradise."

When Mr. and Mrs. Childersleigh emerged on the gravel, Patterson was hurt and scandalized at their smiling faces. Hugh, in his awkward consciousness that cheerfulness must seem singularly out of place just then, humbly strove to deprecate the old man's indignation. He did not, indeed, enter precisely into detailed explanation. But Patterson, under his impenetrable rind, had the shrewdness and some of the susceptibility of his nation; and, looking at the flush on the downcast face of the bride, something like the bleak smile of a November sun flickered over his own sorrowful features.

"Deed but she's bonny," he muttered, *sotto voce*, as if the words had been inspired by conscience rather than sentiment. "Gin there were mair lassies like her there would maybe be mair fules than Mr. Hugh."

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#### CHAPTER XXXIX.

##### "RADLEY'S."

THERE are hotels where the same roof-tree covers the house of mourning and the house of mirth; where, as in the scene in *Rigoletto*, a thin partition separates the corpse from the carnival; where sighs answer to

laughter, and the dirge blends with the joyous refrain. The old "Falcon" at Gravesend was one of them, with the venerable panes in its bow-windows scribbled over with memorial names—panes through which so many streaming eyes have watched the sea-bound Indiamen melting into the river fogs. "Radley's" at Southampton is another; and houses, perhaps, in the course of the year as many aching hearts as any city poor-house or hospital. In proportion even to its ample accommodation, it contained a most disproportionate amount of sorrow the night before the *Tanjore* was to sail for Alexandria. There were Rachels being left of their children who utterly refused to be comforted, and lifted up their voices till the passages echoed to their wails. There were children being orphaned, and fathers leaving all they cared for behind them, going to boil the family pot in sad solitude in the scorching tropics. Lucy Childersleigh, as she met upon the stairs close-veiled figures clinging convulsively to the arms of sad-eyed men, and pale-faced mothers looking wistfully after laughing children they were seeing the last of for years if not for ever, became very melancholy, with a grateful sense of subdued contentment. As for Hugh, with the greater selfishness and callousness of men, he could hardly keep down that rising buoyancy of spirits which made Lucy so ready with her smiles when she felt tears would have been much more in place. He had all but broken with the painful past, and was emerging at length from the night of uncertainty he had so long been groping in. Already he breathed the free air of the ocean, and raised his eyes towards the limitless horizon that stretched before them. To see them doing the honours at their late dinner when the meal was drawing to a close, you would never have taken them for a couple of poverty-stricken adventurers, whose bark was on the shore and getting up her steam. McAlpine and Barrington, who had come to comfort and see the last of their friends, began to think they might quite as well have stayed in London. Like Patterson, indeed, they felt rather aggrieved at the serenity with which the others bore up against the coming separation.

"I tell you what it is, Hugh," grumbled the former, "to look at you and Mrs. Childersleigh now, one would say you were pruning your feathers for the flight home again."

"Well, so we are, McAlpine. At least we must be gone before we can come back, and moreover, after tossing about among uncertainties, one is much inclined to find a home in the first firm land you set your foot on. But you need not remind us of the friends we leave behind us; be sure we shall remember and regret them soon enough and often enough. And I don't forget your promise and Barrington's to come and look us up whenever we may have a roof to offer you, and the sooner the bitterness of parting is over the sooner we shall have our merry meeting."

"So we shall, Hugh, but in the meantime when I go north next week, there will seem to be less sunshine at Baragoil."

"Where you have little enough to spare, as Mrs. Childersleigh knows," remarked Barrington, striving to be cheerful. "As for coming to see you, Hugh, I never made a promise I meant more religiously to

keep. I think I shall charter a steamer for the cruise to the antipodes. The Rushbrooks would join us, I know, but Lady Rushbrook to be won't leave Sir Basil. I tell her change of scene and sea air would set the old man on his legs again, and I verily believe we shall see the Killoden circle reunited in Queensland."

"Never complete again," murmured Lucy, while a deep shadow fell on her husband's features.

Barrington bit his lip, and cursed his stupidity, and blundered on with good-natured presence of mind—

"No, Purkiss, I fear, will not be there, but that we must bear as we best can. He keeps his own secrets, and Sir Basil never meddles with business now-a-days, but by all accounts he will find it hard work to pull things round at '*Childersleighs'*."

"I'm greatly afraid the destination of Miss Childersleigh's money is likely to concern him as little as us. Poor Purkiss! I don't know any one who would have valued it more, but the language of her will and the amount of his legacy do not make me very hopeful for him."

"Queer, you should be talking it over this way, Hugh," remarked McAlpine, "as if you, of all men, had no concern in the matter."

"That is precisely how it is. The one thing I am sure of is, that none of it comes to me. Any one else may hope, even Lucy there."

"So she may, to be sure," murmured McAlpine, meditatively. "And why should not the old lady have put her in? She had adopted her, as you all thought. She saw far more of her than any one else."

"An excellent reason why she should not," returned Hugh, laughingly. "Look at the opportunities she gave herself of appreciating me, and see what has come of them. Besides, Mr. Hooker had his finger in that pie—of that I am very certain."

"Very likely—little doubt of that," assented McAlpine, relapsing into silence and profound reflection, as if he had found the end of a clue in his fingers, and was setting himself to disentangle it.

"What, tea already!" ejaculated Hugh, consulting his watch as the door was thrown open.

"Lord Rushbrook—Mr. Rivington," announced the waiter, bending himself double, with the handle in his hand.

"By Jove, I said so!" exclaimed McAlpine. He had only thought it.

Hugh himself turned slightly pale, and although he did stand up, forgot all about welcoming the arrivals, an omission which his wife, in blushing embarrassment, set herself to repair.

"Thank you, Mrs. Childersleigh, as Hugh has nothing to say for himself; but the truth is, as Rivington found himself obliged to see you, on some pressing business, before you sailed, I thought I might as well have another look at you too." Rushbrook, who seemed unusually excited, paused, and then burst out, "Oh, nonsense, it's no use beating

about the bush—joy never hurts—Hugh half guesses it, and McAlpine knows it all. Besides, you are both at one in your contempt for riches, as in most other things, and here I am pushing myself forward where I have no business whatever, and taking the words out of Rivington's mouth."

"Well," said Mr. Rivington, "I won't deny myself the satisfaction of making an announcement, which has given me no ordinary pleasure, although, as Lord Rushbrook says, I see you more than half anticipate it. I have to congratulate Mr. Childersleigh then in being even more fortunate than he believed himself, in having married a lady nearly as richly dowered with worldly wealth as with all other gifts."

"You mean to say——?"

"That Mrs. Childersleigh inherits everything—some 160,000*l.* in round figures—the house in Harley Street, furniture, plate, and family jewels."

Lucey made a movement, as if then and there she would have thrown herself into her husband's arms, symbolically vesting him with all her newly-acquired goods and chattels; checked it; looked the proposed transfer, and hurried from the room. Her husband threw himself back in a chair. It was not the weight of the money he succumbed to; what stunned him was this sudden upset of all his carefully elaborated plans.

"A rich man in spite of yourself, although you made such an undeniably pauper," observed Rushbrook, "and very hard it is upon you, I must say. Fortune never will give you a chance."

"You've taken your wife for better for worse, you see," chimed in McAlpine. "You can't well help yourself; and, after all, you must remember she didn't mean it, so you had better go and make it up with her."

Hugh took advantage of the thoughtful opening, and, with a brief apology, followed his bride.

"Which fully accounts for all Mr. Hooker's and Mr. Hemprigge's attentions to Miss Winter," remarked McAlpine, as Hugh left the room. "Yet, do you know, until some five minutes back, it never once occurred to me which way the money was going."

"Precisely," said Rivington. "Hooker and that scamp of a son of his were in the secret all along, and at the bottom of the whole swindle. They would have done anything in the world for the orphan, assured beforehand that their charity would have its reward in this life."

"But why should Hemprigge have helped Hugh towards winning the money he meant for himself?"

"He was too clever by half, and did not give Hugh credit for being half so clever, I fancy," suggested Rushbrook. "He grasped at too much, and hoped Hugh might help him to one fortune while he won another in spite of him. To do him justice, he soon found out his mistake, and did his best to retrieve it. What proves Hooker knew all about it, is his keeping himself out of the way to-day; but you ought to have seen Purkiss Childersleigh."

"Why? I am sure he can never accuse Miss Childersleigh of not doing her best to prepare him against disappointment."

"So one would have imagined, but drowning men catch at straws, and I fear—I greatly fear—the partners of 'Childersleigh' are floundering in very deep water. Poor Sir Basil doesn't trouble his head much about it, but Purkiss, who was always thin, is shrivelling visibly into thread-paper. I watched him when Rivington broke the seals, and he had to hold on by the arms of his chair; while the memorandum was being read, his jaw dropped, and his face turned to livid through half the colours of the rainbow. You would have called it a sudden spasm of cholera. But here comes supper—dinner—which you like, and very thoughtful it is of Hugh, for I never ordered it. When a fellow thinks of the happiness of others in a sudden flush of prosperity, why he deserves all he gets. Sit down, Rivington."

Hugh himself, the bearer of many apologies from his wife, came back to do the honours. If he had screwed up his resolution to contemplate the antipodes with positive pleasure, his mind flew naturally enough back to old habits of thought, when the heavy pressure that had borne on it was removed. Then he was given a fresh lease of those home friendships that had stood such fiery tests, and spared a fresh series of experiments on colonial human nature. Considering how honestly his heart had been set on the toil and adventures that awaited him, it was strange how little he regretted them. He resigned himself with complacency and good temper to extending himself once more on a bed of roses, and it only seemed the more tempting that the rose-leaves were strewed for him by the little hands of his wife.

"Upon my word, for a man so bent on emigration as you were yesterday, you bear up wonderfully," said Rushbrook; "for I don't suppose you intend to occupy cabin No. 7,—or whichever the number was—in the *Tanjore*?"

"No, I fancy we shall defer our visit to Queensland till Barrington gives us a passage out in his steam-yacht. And I am sorry for it. The *Tanjore* cabin was so snug, and the steward and stewardess tipped in advance. But I must say, now I dare to think of it, Hants and Surrey did look lovely to-day, and I don't know that I shall be sorry to see them again to-morrow. Heigho!" His face clouded slightly as he closed the sentence with a genuine sigh. The truth is, his thoughts had travelled back by the South-Western to Childersleigh, gone beyond recall. After all, the Childersleigh money had come too late. To him England could never again be all it might have been.

Did Barrington divine what was passing in his mind? Was he on the watch for certain symptoms, for certainly in general he was no very quick observer. At any rate, the others thought he might have spared their friend a painful subject when he said,—“Pity now you parted with your place—eh, Childersleigh? I always told you you would repent that bit of Quixotry.”

"At least you have the satisfaction of knowing yourself a true prophet," returned Childersleigh, impatiently.

"I said you would be sorry for it, and I was sure you would. But in those days Mrs. Childersleigh led you by the heart-strings, and there was no use in arguing with you."

"Well, well," said Childersleigh, who had mastered his passing irritation ; "if I was a fool to listen to foolish counsels, you must confess we have come off better than we deserved. As for Childersleigh, I own I would rather talk about anything else. It used to be a pleasant subject, but now ——"

"You followed your own line," pursued Barrington, imperturbably, as if Hugh had never spoken, "and all your friends could do was to take theirs. You would not care to buy it back, would you, if it came into the market by any chance ?"

Hugh looked at him in silence. Joys are like sorrows, he thought, and you often flush them in coveys.

"Because, if you did, I don't mind letting you have it for what I gave. You see I have one place in Norfolk already, and don't much care about another. The liquidators were in such a deuce of a hurry to sell, that I was tempted to sink my spare capital at Childersleigh, and they tell me I had it reasonably enough."

"You are not trifling with me, Barrington ?"

"Not I, indeed. I should have prepared a dramatic surprise for you and Mrs. Childersleigh, when I had persuaded you to pay me a visit. But in the first place, I thought it was no use letting you fret yourself uselessly. God knows you have had bother enough lately. And then McAlpine, whom I took into the secret a few minutes ago, suggested there would be nothing original in it, that I should find the idea in *Waverley*. So Childersleigh is yours whenever you like, my dear fellow. You ought to find everything from the weathercocks to the door-mats just as you left it, and if you choose to rough it on a scratch establishment, I see no reason why you should not go there to-morrow, and wind up your honeymoon under the ancestral trees. Bless you, my dear fellow, I was convinced you would want the place sooner or later : it was only a question of time. I had hoped to have been out of pocket by the arrangement, but it is fated I shall never pay off that Homburg debt of mine with its compound interest. And now," said Barrington, concluding the longest and most successful speech he had ever made, "suppose we leave him to sleep on the events of the day. I'm afraid you are not quite out of your trouble yet, Hugh, and are in for a broken night after all you have gone through in the evening."

## CHAPTER XL.

## HOME AT LAST.

It was bright autumn, and all was life at Childersleigh. The house had cast off its weeds and put on the garments of gladness. The gravel was scored with wheels and dintered with hoof-marks, the stable-yard lumbered with dusty carriages, smoking horses and hissing grooms. The triumphal arches that spanned the gates of the park and church-yard had cost Patterson many a sleepless night, and Childersleigh some little vexation. The church bells rang out those doleful merry peals that give a tinge so sad to English merry-making. Without, the house was *en fête*; within, there was literally house-warming, for Mr. and Mrs. Childersleigh had come down to take formal possession of their home. Assuredly no one would have looked to see Lord Hestercombe staying calmly on the borders of the London postal district in October, or his son lingering in the metropolis while the cock pheasants were crowing peacefully in the Hestercombe coverts. But Rushbrook, resolved on matrimony, was not the man to stand loitering on the threshold of the temple of Hymen. Moreover, philosophically evoking good from evil, in the failing state of Maude's father's health, he had seen a golden chance of being married in rational fashion, without having his modesty shocked by the demonstrations with which, in normal circumstances, the heir of the Hestercombes would have been paraded before the altar. His own mind made up, he easily imposed his will on his father, for the Earl was haunted with the apprehension that his only son might slip back through his fingers to hopeless bachelorhood. Lady Hestercombe herself was made the intercessor with her destined daughter-in-law for advancing the day, for, in Sir Basil's state of health, Maude was absolutely her own mistress. Hugh backed her ladyship with all his interest and eloquence, so did Lucy; and when their joint entreaties had prevailed, it had been settled the wedding should be combined with the Childersleigh house-warming. The circle assembled there limited itself to our intimate friends, Lord Rushbrook joining it for the day, although he nominally occupied his rooms at Hestercombe House.

Lord Hestercombe arrived in the course of the afternoon in a state of visible excitement, and took an early opportunity of claiming his nephew's services to do him the out-door honours of the place.

"I have not seen it since your father's time, except that evening when I ran down for the funeral. I should like to know that things have not changed much for the worse in your absence." And when he got his nephew out of earshot his lordship broke out: "You don't happen to have heard the news from Wurzelshire?"

"What news?"

"I thought not. I only chanced to hear it as I passed through the town. Poor Roper, who came in for the county when you declined, shot

in the thigh at a battue at Worsley. Couldn't stop the bleeding; went off in a couple of hours."

"Ah!"

"Yes, most melancholy business; leaves a young widow and half-a-dozen children. So we must have a man in the field forthwith, and the address must be ready for the day after the funeral. The Liberals have been hard at work with the registration roll. I'm only afraid your refusing last time may have hurt you with Dunstanburgh."

"I really don't think it did. I don't fancy I spoiled any chance I may have with him."

"And this time you would stand if he were to repeat his offer?"

"Nothing in the world I should like better, now I am back at Chil-dersleigh, and an idle man."

"'Gad, I'll send off a special messenger to Dunstanburgh this very day before dinner. They told me at 'The Travellers' he was expected in town."

And in high good-humour his lordship passed his arm through his nephew's, built castles in the air and in Westminster, praised and admired everything he saw, and finally launched into the future of his son.

"I wish Rushbrook could be persuaded to try public life. I do wish your example would tempt him to that as well as to that other——"

"I fear it will not, but there's no saying. I am quite sure he would distinguish himself if he cared to try. Few men have sounder sense, and I can imagine no one more likely to be ready in debate. However, he is active by nature although idle by habit; and once married and settled may want a pursuit."

"I suppose marriage is the best thing that could happen to him?"

"No question of it. Rushbrook is just the sort of man that marriage is the making of; he wants an anchor to keep him from drifting. By the way, as it turns out, I fear Maude will have little more money than what she takes under her mother's settlements."

"We have married heiresses too often in our family that money should be an object with us now-a-days. The worst of it is, if one does go to the City, people will give you credit for finding a fortune there. My feeling is, that it is a pity, in the circumstances, Sir Basil does not retire in name as well as reality."

"Retiring is the one thing that would touch him now, and moreover, the new partners pay heavily for taking over the name of Childersleigh with the business. The difference it makes in the purchase-money may involve the present firm's escape from insolvency."

"Then what becomes of the son? I confess I dislike him infinitely more than anything else in the connection."

"I assure you I don't quarrel with your taste. Purkiss, I believe, remains in the house, ostensibly a partner, actually a cypher—the new men are much too shrewd to trust his vaunted talents. And I don't envy his lot. What with the loss of fortune, occupation, and prospects,

and the perpetual fret to his vanity, the bitterest enemy he has made might be content with his punishment. You may bear with him in the meantime, for if ever I read a man's future in his face, poor Purkiss will not trouble you long."

As the pair strolled towards the house in friendly chat, a servant bustled out to them with a letter for Mr. Childersleigh, marked "immediate." Hugh opened it with an apology to his uncle, and then passed it to him with a smile.

"So you were right about Dunstanburgh," exclaimed the peer, "and I confess nothing can be more handsome or flattering. If Dunstanburgh comes after you a second time, he believes you will do him credit, and I never knew him deceived in a man yet. You may possibly have to fight the seat this time, but there can be no rational doubt of our winning it, and as for the expenses, they must be my affair. Nay, no words about it. I gave into you about Rushbrook's wedding and your house-warming here, and I am quite determined to have my own way in this."

It was natural enough that Mr. Childersleigh's oldest friends should make a point of offering him their congratulations on a day so auspicious. Nevertheless he was a little surprised when Mr. Hooker's name was brought him, as he was on the point of retiring to dress for dinner. "Send him up," he said, after a moment's hesitation.

And Mr. Hooker entered, his scrupulously brushed garments bagging on his wasted form, rubbing his hands nervously in the old fashion; his worn face plastered with greasy smiles, distrust and suspicion lurking in the corners of his lips and eyes, feeling the ground as he advanced into the room, like a Highland pony picking its steps among moss-hags.

"Oh, Mr. Childersleigh, that I should have been spared to see this happy day!"

"Thanks, Hooker," said Mr. Childersleigh, rather brusquely. "Well, now you may sing your *Nunc dimittis*—I mean you'd better go down and get some dinner before you go back to town."

"Oh, Mr. Childersleigh!"

"Never mind them now. I'll take the rest of your congratulations for granted."

"But, sir—Mr. Childersleigh—there may possibly be unfavourable impressions. I should be happy to take this opportunity——"

"I'll spare you the trouble of discussing my affairs. If you have anything to say about your own, say on."

"Well, Mr. Childersleigh, if, as an old servant of the family,—not that it was that brought me here, I need hardly say,—if I might venture to request your countenance and recommendation in the new profession I have been constrained to adopt in my old age——"

"Which is —?"

"One, perhaps, you may think not altogether suited to a man of my standing. But resignation is a Christian duty, and my necessities would not be denied. I can assure you, Mr. Childersleigh——"

"It is —?"

"Well, then, it's delicate inquiries, sir. Mr. Ferret, the eminent detective, of Cecil Street, retains my services on his staff; with a separate commission on any business I may be the means of introducing to the establishment. Should you, at any time, have occasion——"

"If I should take to underhand dealings at any time, I shall infallibly think of you. Good-evening."

"By the way," said Hugh to his guests, when the ladies had left the dinner-table—"by the way, I have just had a call from an old friend, come to beg me to advertise him." And he rehearsed his little dialogue with Mr. Hooker with much animation.

"The very best thing he could take to," observed Lord Rushbrook, "now that he has been stripped of every shred of the character he took such care of. He looks so respectable, and is such a thorough-paced scoundrel!"

"Suppose, Rushbrook, we set him agoing with an engagement," observed McAlpine. "Retain him to hunt down that precious son of his. He is more likely to run into him than any one else, and just the man to do it, if you make it worth his while!"

"Ah, that reminds me!" exclaimed Barrington, who had arrived by a late train before dinner. "Will you allow me to ring for the evening paper, Hugh? There is something in it will interest you all, although it must deprive Mr. Hooker of the engagement you kindly intend him."

He took the paper from the servant, and read aloud—

"'Horrible tragedy.—Murder of an absconding Secretary.—By the latest journals from the Havannah, we learn the tragic end of the notorious Mr. Hemprigge. Hemprigge, it would appear, had taken his passage at Cadiz for Cuba. On board the Spanish mail-boat, the play at *monté* had been even deeper than usual, and heavy sums had changed hands, greatly to the advantage of the fortunate Englishman, who travelled under a *nom de voyage*. Arrived at the Havannah, it would seem Hemprigge had lingered on, giving his victims "their revenge," until whispers of foul play were followed by threats that, doubtless, reached his ears. Literally on the eve of his intended departure for Aspinwall, a stranger returning to the Fonda de l'Espana stumbled over his yet warm body almost on the threshold of the hotel. The unhappy man had been stabbed under the arm from behind, and when picked up, life was extinct. As his watch and costly jewellery were found on his person, revenge was presumed to be the motive of the crime. The arrival shortly afterwards of the English detectives, who had followed him from London, led to an identification, subsequently placed beyond all question by documents discovered in his luggage.'

There was general silence. Except Lord Hestercombe and Barrington himself, all of them had known Hemprigge personally, and known him well. To Hugh it seemed but yesterday that he was loathing the dead man and longing to be rid of him on any terms. But now his thoughts

flew back to the earlier days, when they had been allies and intimates, if not friends. In his unfeigned grief over the fate of his former acquaintance, he felt in genuine charity with his surviving enemy, and could Hooker have penetrated his remorsefully generous intentions, the shock of his son's fate would, doubtless, have been softened to him. Hugh's friends respected his evident emotion, if they did not altogether sympathize with it, and Lord Hestercombe broke in on a hush that was becoming painful, by making the move to leave the table.

It was a relief when his guests, dispersing for the night, left Hugh alone with his wife to take actual possession of their home, and give free vent to their thoughts.

"Hempriggo dead, Purkiss and scores of better men beggared! I wish you could tell me, Lucy, why I should be wedded and rich and happy when so many have come to frightful grief in the rush for wealth?"

"They were as they showed: you were always better than you seemed. They have had their reward, as you have. You helped Mr. Barrington in the first of your prosperity, and saved yourself Childersleigh. You thought of me in the shock of your own adversity, when no one else did, and ——"

"No great merit in that," interrupted Hugh, thinking his wife looked more lovely than ever in her eager defence of her husband against himself.

"And as you took his happiness in charge—and mine, you must really forgive us for doing some thing for yours in our turn. But how you would have resented anything of the sort, Hugh, when I first knew you!"

"I believe you are right, Lucy," he laughed. "But since then I have seen my best-laid schemes fail, and my wisdom turn to folly; even my honour might have gone in the match with time, had I not persuaded you to take charge of my education. And now I am quite resigned to accept yourself and your fortune, and everything else you and heaven may have in store for me as the price of my obedience."

"If Lord Rushbrook only makes Maude half as happy," murmured Lucy, half closing her eyes in her ideal paradise.

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## Lady Caroline.

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ABOUT 3 P.M. one muggy autumn afternoon there was no little commotion in a quiet street of Bloomsbury. A carriage drove up to No. 7, and even the policeman of the beat was roused from apathy. For it was a narrow, shabby street, through which went few vehicles drawn by horses. Occasionally a cab was to be seen there ; and every morning an itinerant mender of "cast-iron, copper, or brass," passed along with a portable stove, grinding-wheel, and other apparatus hoisted on a cart drawn by a pony : but the pony was a very lowly one, and the cart was little more than a wheelbarrow. The carriage, however, which plunged up to No. 7 was of the kind seen chiefly in Belgravia : the horses were tall, sleek, fiery, and connoisseurs, no doubt, in corn ; the coachman was evidently a person of consequence ; the footman a person of still more consequence ; the liveries and the hammer-cloth were very grand ; and on the panel of either door was painted a coronet. Naturally, therefore, there was a flattened nose against a pane of nearly every window which commanded even a faint and oblique view of No. 7. As the horses came to a standstill with a snort of protest and indignant tossings of the head, down leapt the footman with the grace and agility of one who knows that the eye of the public is ever upon him. What man could do with a knocker and a bell he did ; and forthwith there appeared a maid-of-all-work, who flung open the door as wide as it would go, and stood beside it in a supplicatory attitude, as if to intimate that the invaders might take immediate possession, but that she hoped some mercy would be shown to the inmates in consideration of their prompt and unconditional surrender. Thereupon the footman, without a word of parley, returned to the carriage, stood a moment with his fore-finger to his hat at the carriage-window, and coming back once more to the distracted maid, said,—

"Missis in or out ?"

"In, sir, please."

"My lady wants to see her."

"You're wanted, mum," cried the maid down the passage ; whilst the footman strode away to the carriage, opened the door, pulled down the steps, and let out a lady whom it had been worth a journey to gaze upon.

She was dressed in the latest fashion ; but in colour, texture, shape, and set of everything she wore there was nothing for the surliest critic to find fault with : there was no glare, and there was no extravagance. She herself was embodied grace : from her broad, white, smooth forehead, to her shapely foot, she gave token of superiority ; yet she did not seem to repel but rather to invite approach. She did not "sweep" towards the

house, but she moved so easily and rhythmically, that at the music of her tread the very pavement might have danced. Airily she floated over the threshold ; her smile was balm to the troubled spirit of the maid-of-all-work ; and her voice was melody, as the simple question came in low, sweet, measured tones,—

“ Pray can I see the landlady ? ”

A door opened and there emerged into the passage a silvery-haired, hollow-cheeked, severe-looking but gentlewoman-like dame ; for Mrs. Gawton “ had seen better days,” and had learnt asperity only from adversity, and distrust only from experience.

“ Will you walk in, ma’am ? ” Mrs. Gawton asked, coldly, as she held open a parlour-door, and stood stiffly aside to let the strange lady pass.

With a courteous bow and a “ thank you,” which was of itself a little song sung to a sweet tune, she entered the room and stood modestly waiting until Mrs. Gawton, seating herself a little defiantly, and pointing to an easy-chair opposite to her own, said in her most unsympathetic tones,—

“ Pray sit down, ma’am.”

Her manner of sinking into a chair would have charmed a mistress of deportment ; and the long, low sigh she heaved, would have touched a harder heart than that of Mrs. Gawton, who asked with unusual gentleness,—

“ Can I be of any service to you, ma’am ? ”

She answered,—and her answer sounded like sweet, but melancholy strains in a minor key—

“ Will you kindly tell me, if you can, and I am sure you can, what I want to know ? I read in the paper this morning that—that—this, I read this”—and she took with trembling fingers from her pocket-book a slip of newspaper which she handed to Mrs. Gawton. Mrs. Gawton glanced at it carelessly, but flushed immediately, and asked in her coldest, harshest, most hostile tones,—

“ Well, ma’am, what is it you wish to know ? ”

“ He—died—here, it says,” murmured the strange lady with quivering lips.

“ He did, ma’am.”

“ Was he ill long ? ”

“ Some years, I should say,” answered Mrs. Gawton sardonically : “ he died a little every week, it is my belief, for the last five years or more ; but with the fever which carried him off he was ill only a few days.”

The strange lady bent down her lovely head, covered her face with her hands, and her whole form shook with emotion.

Mrs. Gawton sat silent, grim, watchful, and almost triumphant.

The lady suddenly looked up and asked softly, pleadingly,—

“ Can you tell me where he was buried ? ”

“ At Norwood Cemetery.”

“ By whose desire ? ”

"By mine."

"Yours!" exclaimed the lady in a tone of quiet surprise.

"Yes, mine," said Mrs. Gawton a little testily: "there was no one else to express any wish. And," she continued with a significant glance, "I do think it was a shameful thing that if he had wealthy relatives or friends, he was left so entirely to himself."

She did not wince, but tears trickled slowly down either cheek as she asked, almost in a whisper,—"Was he *very* poor?"

"Very poor," answered Mrs. Gawton; "and," she added with a little sob, "quite friendless."

"Oh! but surely," said the strange lady entreatingly, "there was *some* one to look after him—he was not *quite* alone."

"He was never *quite* alone," said Mrs. Gawton, drily.

"Pray forgive me: of course he was not; you I am sure were——"

"I alluded to no earthly being," interrupted Mrs. Gawton, solemnly.

"I perfectly understand you; but the ear of the sick longs for some human voice, and some human sympathiser. If he had but had a sister, or—or—oh! surely you know what I mean!"

She spoke so earnestly that the colour came into her pale face, her hands were clasped tightly together, her mouth, as she ceased speaking, remained expectantly open, and the pupils of her beautiful eyes were dilated.

Even Mrs. Gawton was impressed by the loveliness before her, but maintained her reserve, and replied stiffly,—"With the exception of the doctor and myself no human being approached his bedside."

"Oh! cruel, cruel," murmured the strange lady, as if she were speaking to herself; "those who knew him must have loved him."

"He couldn't afford to be loved," muttered Mrs. Gawton, grimly; "such acquaintances as he had love only those who can make some sort of show, and only as long as they can. A few called, and left cards; and, after all, what could they do? It was fever; and I should not have liked the responsibility of letting them see him."

The strange lady sighed deeply, and "Did he express any wish at the last?" she asked, faintly.

"When he first became seriously ill," answered Mrs. Gawton, "he gave me a little prayer-book, and asked me to take care, if he should die, to have it thrown into his grave upon his coffin."

"And did you?—did you?"

"I did, ma'am, of course: it was little enough to ask."

"Was there any name in the prayer-book?"

"There was no name, but there were the initials C. G., with a coronet above," answered Mrs. Gawton, with a significant look.

But the lady was unconscious of looks; she had sunk back in her chair, covered her face with her handkerchief, and gave no sign of life beyond the heaving of her bosom.

There was a pause of a few minutes, and then she rose from her chair, tranquil, but pale as death, and Mrs. Gawton also rose.

"Before I go, I want you to be kind enough to tell me two things—(I assure you I have an undoubted right to know)—were you at any expense for him? and is there a stone on his grave?"

"No," answered Mrs. Gawton to both questions. "He left me all he had, which was little, but enough; and there has not been time yet to put up a stone, but I am having one prepared."

"Oh, if you would only let *me* see to that! I have no right to expect you to grant me anything; but pray do not refuse me this favour!"

"I don't know who you are, ma'am," replied Mrs. Gawton, bluntly.

The strange lady said, with a faint smile, "I beg your pardon; of course, if you please, you have a right to ask who I am, and I cannot refuse to tell you. But," she continued, "I should consider it a great kindness if you would not press your right."

"You can do as you think fit, ma'am," observed Mrs. Gawton, stiffly.

With a sigh, she murmured, "It would serve no end; and I have particular reasons: but—but you will grant me the little favour I asked?" she added, beseechingly.

Mrs. Gawton hesitated.

"You will be able to see for yourself whether I perform my part," urged the lady.

"At any rate you must have the address of the stone-mason," grumbled Mrs. Gawton.

"Oh, yes; I forgot: will you be so *very* kind——"

"Here it is," interrupted Mrs. Gawton, drawing from her pocket a card, which she held out to her visitor, who took it with a trembling hand; and then, with a gracious bow, and a muttered "Thank you—thank you—a thousand thanks," dropped her veil over her face, and floated away airily to her carriage.

The carriage had attracted so much and close attention that a policeman stood guard over it. The door was opened; the steps went down with a rattle; the lady hurried in, giving an order as she went; the footman touched the brim of his hat, as a sign not only of respect, but of hearing, understanding, and obeying, banged steps and door in the orthodox fashion, and leaping nimbly up beside his coachfellow, said, in grumbling tones,—“Treat this, Jim; Norwood Cimet’ry.”

And the handsome carriage, and handsomer horses, and handsomest hammer-cloth and coachman and footman, dashed gaily along the road to the Cemetery, whilst nursemaids and mothers drew the attention of their babes to the “pretty carriage” and the “fine lady,” of whose clothes they could just catch a glimpse, and they sang, “She shall have music wherever she goes.”

The fine lady was leaning back in her carriage, and the music she had was the sound of her own sobs; and she sobbed as any nursemaid would sob whose dearest had gone to the last, long home. “Ah true heart!” was the burden of her thoughts. “Ah noble soul! if to love with all the heart and mind and strength; if to be patient and brave; if to

keep faith and honour through neglect and poverty and friendlessness ; if to prefer another to self ; if to scorn the faintest semblance of what is ignoble, be any part of heroism, then the world has lost a hero and a woman the most blameless of knights. Ah me ! that wealth and rank and baubles and hereditary names should be of more account than happiness ! But he himself said, like his noble self, ‘*noblesse oblige* ; *noblesse* must endure self-sacrifice ; and I, too, will show that in suffering I can be worthy of the acknowledged *noblesse*.’ And yet I doubt whether he did not err : for she whom he loved is childless and he is dead. And he died poor and friendless—poor and friendless.” Such was the music which the fine lady had.

When the carriage stopped at the Cemetery gates, she entered the lodge and made a request. The result was that the lodge-keeper, after diligent examination of a ledger, conducted her to a certain part of the Cemetery far away from the gates, pointed to a newly-made grave, and then discreetly left her. Before the grave she stood awhile lost in thought and overwhelmed with memories : then she sank upon her knees, laid her cheek upon the mound, and wept and prayed her fill : at last she took from her bosom a white flower and placed it at the head of the grave, and her face was as an angel’s when she returned to the keeper’s lodge. The keeper, although his home was amongst the dead, was by no means indifferent to the living ; he had even those feelings which would have urged him to serve the lady for the sake of her lovely face ; he had, still more, the feelings which become respectfully genial at the sight of carriages and horses (hearses and hearse-horses excepted, for he considered them vulgar) ; and he had, most of all, the feelings which quite gush out under the influence of accidental gold, such as accrued to him from the lovely lady’s visit. With his hat in his hand, emotional moisture in his eyes, and a resolution to have something to drink as soon as possible in his heart, he ushered the lady into one of those funereal shops which abound in the neighbourhood of Norwood Cemetery, and which are inhabited by hewers and gravers of stone.

And so, when, after the lapse of a few days, the lady again disturbed her servants’ equanimity by driving to Norwood Cemetery, the grave by which she knelt, and on which she placed her flower, had a simple head-stone, on which was inscribed : “ Sacred to the memory of George Gordon, who died at the age of 32, on the 17th of October, 18—. Faithful unto the end.”

Quite a dozen times in the course of a year did the lovely lady’s servants have their thoughts turned towards warnings (in a double sense) by an unfashionable drive to the gloomy Cemetery.

Now it happened one day on her return that her lord remarked to her, playfully,—“ You must have had a very pleasant drive, Carrie : you look even brighter than usual : or have you been trying the effect of euphrasia ? ”

The lovely lady answered softly,—“ I have been to Norwood Cemetery,

dear : it makes me feel very sad at the time, but I feel easier, happier, and better after it."

And her lord rejoined quickly—" Ah ! I know : he was a fine fellow, a very fine fellow :" and then he sighed and his look was moody. But the lovely lady went close to him, and wound her arm about him, and gazed up in his face, and murmured,—" You are not angry, Arthur ? "

In a moment the gloom cleared away from his face as light clouds vanish before a brisk north wind : he replied tenderly and cheerfully,—

" Angry, my darling ? How could I be ? He deserved at least to be lamented."

" You know you gave me leave, Arthur," she added confidently.

" Heartily," said he, frankly ; " and, if it will be any satisfaction to you, the next time you go I will go with you myself."

" God bless you, Arthur," she whispered, " for being so unselfish, and just, and good."

Then she tripped upstairs to dress, and clasped her hands and raised her eyes in thanksgiving ; and half she thought, and half she muttered, " Ah ! what am I that I should win two such hearts ! "

She threw herself down upon a couch and pondered. And as fancy followed memory, and memory fancy through her brain, a great light came into her eyes, her lips parted, and a faint blush passed over her cheeks. When she rose to ring for her maid she sighed,—" And *then* shall I love him more ? " When ? and whom ?

Let us go back twelve years : she was then sixteen, or a few months more.

It was a lovely day in June, and the banks of the Thames in Berkshire were beautiful enough to draw down an angel from the skies. Weeping-willows dipped their graceful branches in the stream ; the wild-flowers were out in their gayest attire ; the gorgeous kingfishers flashed here and there across the water ; the fish leaped up for sheer light-heartedness ; and many a winged and creeping thing made a glimmer and a hum amidst the grass. A young man of twenty, with the air and dress of one who belonged to the body of gentlemen, had followed the winding river for a while, and then, turning off and going with light strides and easy leaps across country, had reached a point where he lay down and enjoyed the scenery. He found himself close to a piece of water which was almost as wide as the river, of which it appeared to be a sort of creek ; whither it went he could not see for wood and foliage, but occasionally he caught glimpses of it far away where it looked like a broad, glistening blade of steel. An elegant house, a picturesque church, a romantic arch, a willow-walk, an enticing valley, which brought to mind—

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain heights,  
For Love is of the valley—

a steep ravine, a shepherd, a flock of sheep, a tinkling bell, umbrageous trees, close-cropped and elastic turf, gave satisfaction to his senses. There

was something about the place where he lay which made him think he must have wandered into private grounds ; but he was young and confident, and consoled himself with the reflection that there was probably a right of way, and that at any rate he had trespassed unintentionally. Just opposite to him there was a promontory on the further side of the stream ; it jutted out some distance into the water, and at its extreme point was moored a punt. As he gazed dreamily at these objects he gradually closed his eyes and sank into a sort of slumber, from which he was roused by a melodious sound. It seemed to him that the sweetest-voiced of all the muses was demanding of him by what right he invaded their domains. He looked towards the punt, sprang to his feet, uncovered his head, and stood in the attitude of one who is surprised, and charmed, and awed. And with reason : for in the punt appeared a creature before whom kings and princes would have been fain to bow the head. The face was divine ; the hair fell down behind in streams of amber ; the blue eyes might have been filched from where the sky was flecked by two white specks ; the nose and brow and chin were a possession for immortals ; the parted mouth was more lovely than music's shell ; and as the liquid voice came once more floating over the stream, the young man thought within himself, "*Sonat certe deam*, 'tis surely the voice of a goddess."

But he wist not what was said by the goddess, who stole his heart with silvern laughter.

And now there was visible, at some distance behind the goddess, a figure, mortal every whit, hastening down the grassy slope which led to the saucy promontory. The new-comer was tall and gaunt, wore a straw bonnet with a green veil, was clad in sombre vestments, moved, although hastily, with careful dignity, and uttered shrill sounds, which, after the voice of the goddess, sounded to the young man as a penny trumpet after a golden flute. Once more the goddess, holding in her ungloved hand what amongst mortals would be called a garden-hat, cried in laughing tones, which this time cleared the stream and reached even to the heart of the young man.—“Are—you—aware, sir,—you—are—trespassing ?”

At this moment the bonnet-wearer reached the chain which held the punt moored, and the goddess tripped lightly to the waterward end, and stood on the extreme edge. The bonnet-wearer angrily pulled the chain with a sharp jerk, and the goddess fell prone into the yielding waters. Hereupon two shrieks and a loud groan made hideous for a moment the still summer afternoon. Then a splash was heard as the young man, having flung down hat and coat, plunged unhesitatingly into the stream, and swam towards a floating treasure of amber hair. The treasure had but just sunk a second time beneath the surface as he reached the spot ; and, after diving once, he came up with a white-robed figure, clasped gently, but surely, by his left arm. Reverently he bore his burden towards the promontory, and placed it in safety upon the green grass : and behold ! it was no goddess, but mortal maiden in a swoon.

“God bless you, sir !” said the bonnet-wearer, earnestly, holding out

her hand ; but he took no heed, he only stared at the motionless form, and was careless of blessing as of cursing. "She has only fainted," said the bonnet-wearer. "Oh ! will you kindly run up to the house and say that Lady Caroline wants her maid ?"

He made no reply, but pointed, with a look of inquiry, towards the elegant house.

"Yes, that is the house ; may I ask you to be as quick as you can ?"

He nodded almost angrily, as if he thought she might have taken his quickness for granted ; tucked up his trousers, cumbrosomely wet, and sped over the ground at the pace of a champion runner. When he reappeared with shawls, and restoratives, and the panting, hot, dishevelled, sulky-looking maid, it was clear that *she* considered he had been quick enough. He found Lady Caroline restored to her senses, but still very weak from the shock she had sustained. She was seated upon a little mossy bank, with her head upon the bonnet-wearer's lap. At the sight of her rescuer she smiled faintly and tried to rise, but could not. She held out her hand, however, and said sweetly,—"I cannot thank you sufficiently now, sir ; but, if you will call upon us to-morrow, papa—or rather, papa will call upon you. Pray excuse me, I am so faint still."

The young man respectfully took for a moment the outstretched hand, but was prevented from speaking by the bonnet-wearer, who said,—

"If you *could* make it convenient to call to-morrow, sir, I am sure the Earl would consider it very kind of you ; or, if you will give me your card or address, the Earl will call upon *you*."

"My card-case," rejoined the young man, smiling, "is in my coat-pocket on the other side of the river ; and, besides, I don't live very near here, and the place where I am at present staying is some miles off ; but, if I *may* call and inquire after Lady Caroline, I shall be only fulfilling a pleasant duty."

Her attendants had now helped Lady Caroline to rise, having carefully encased her in manifold wrappings ; these she pushed aside, as she once more held out her hand to her rescuer, and said, faintly,—"Good-by. I will send a man to take you across."

But the young man laughed gaily, and rejoined,—"Oh, that is quite unnecessary ; I can go back as I came," and, with a bow, he plunged once more into the stream, and swam back to his original starting-place.

The three beholders of his sudden procedure stood watching him until he was on dry land ; and, then, as he merely picked up his hat and coat and hurried off without looking to the right or the left or behind him, they walked as rapidly as they could towards the house. When they had proceeded a score yards or so, Lady Caroline said, suddenly, with a sigh—

"I wish I had a brother like him, Guvvy."

"He is a very gentleman-like young man, my dear."

Lady Caroline laughed a soft, low laugh, and asked,—"Is that all you can say for him ?" And immediately she added, "Oh, I do so hope he will not take cold ! "

"I hope *you* will not take cold, darling. There is little to fear this lovely weather for a strong young man like that."

"I should never forgive myself," murmured Lady Caroline, slowly; and then, assuming a sudden sprightliness, she continued volubly, "But it was all your fault, Guvvy; you know you tried to drown me, you cruel, wicked, revengeful woman!—I shall tell papa how you treated me—as if I were a superfluous puppy or kitten."

The bonnet-wearer smiled fondly but sadly, and her eyes filled with tears as she said,—“I acted very foolishly, my dear, as I shall myself inform your papa; but I think I could willingly give my poor life for yours.”

“Hush!” whispered Lady Caroline, softly; “you know it was all my fun, Guvvy. Don’t I love you next to papa?”

The walk was finished in happy silence.

About noon the next day the young man called. The door was opened by as near an approach to a perfect gentleman as can be arrived at by means of well-made black clothes, a white neckerchief, a grey head, no whiskers, and a bland expression.

“I had permission to inquire after Lady Caroline, this morning,” said the visitor carelessly.

At once the door-opener seemed to be illumined by flashes of intelligence: he broke out into countless smiles and bows as he threw back the door, in token of unlimited welcome, as far as it would go, and poured out a rapid volley of words, showing good-will, respect, gratitude, and admiration, by frequent introduction, after his kind, of the complimentary “sir.”

The grey-headed servitor conducted the visitor through a handsome hall, at the end of which was a flight of steps leading down to a spacious lawn and a glorious garden; hastily opened a door close by the steps, and bawled in an excited manner,—“The gentleman to inquire after Lady Caroline, my lord.”

At the words an old gentleman with nothing very remarkable in his personal appearance, and looking exactly like ordinary country gentlemen who have white hair, clean-shaven and ruddy countenances, and yellow waistcoats, rose promptly from an easy chair in which he was seated by a door-window opening upon a terrace, threw down a blue-book with an air of relief, and advanced hurriedly with extended hand towards his visitor, saying,—

“This is very kind of you: *I* ought, of course, to have first called on you; but no one seems to have had wits enough left to get your address. Dawson, a chair—over there—thank you, that will do. Pray take that chair, sir. That will do, Dawson.” Dawson left the room; the young man sat down; and the Earl resumed his seat, which was exactly opposite the young man’s.

The young man had as yet found no opportunity of opening his mouth, but he now said modestly and easily, “I received permission to call and

inquire after Lady Caroline : I hope she has not taken cold or suffered at all——”

“ Not the least bit in the world,” interrupted the Earl with a smile, and an expression of pleasant remembrance ; “ I think it has done the little goose good : her spirits are higher than ever this morning. But about yourself ? ”

“ I am *sure* it has done *me* good,” was the decisive answer.

“ Then,” said the Earl, “ it only remains for me to endeavour to express—very imperfectly, I am afraid—my sense of the deep debt of gratitude——”

At this word the young man rose hastily with a blush on his face, and, with a pleasant laugh, said deprecatingly, “ Excuse me for interrupting you, but you must really say nothing about gratitude : I consider myself the most fortunate of men. I never had a more pleasant bath ; and, if Lady Caroline has suffered no harm, there is nothing, as it seems to me, left but for me to thank you for your courtesy, leave my congratulations for Lady Caroline, and go my way rejoicing.”

During this little speech the Earl’s face had changed expression from joyous to grave, from grave to stern, and from stern to almost angry.

“ I must beg you,” he said, “ to sit down again, and to hear what I have to say : I have a right to a hearing.” The young man sat down. “ It may sit well on *you*, ” resumed the Earl, “ to treat the matter with levity : but to *me* it is a serious affair. Let me tell you that you preserved *two* lives, my only daughter’s—my only child’s—life and my own. For, if I had lost her, though I might not have been dead in the ordinary sense, my life would have been really of no use to me. To say nothing of the danger to yourself : for, may I ask if you are aware that the stream, independently of weeds and other obstructions, is at the place you ventured into more than fourteen feet deep ? ”

“ It seemed to be nice and deep, ” replied the young man, carelessly, and with the gusto of an accomplished swimmer and diver.

The Earl looked steadily at him for a moment ; then his face became gradually overspread with a radiance of smiles, and he only said :—

“ You are incorrigible, I see : give me your hand, and, as I shake it, let me pay you a thousand—thousand thanks, and—God bless you.”

And the Earl’s tremulous voice and moistened eyes bore witness to the genuineness of his utterances.

The young man now once more prepared to take his departure, but the Earl begged him to be seated, and with the most friendly smile remarked, “ You are in a vast hurry to go ; but I have a few questions—which you may think very impertinent—to ask. First of all, I should very much like to know your name,—may I ? ”

“ Oh, certainly, ” replied the young man, laughing ; and taking from his pocket a card, he handed it to the Earl, saying,—

“ That is a *multum in parvo* : it will tell you at a glance more about me than you could learn by several questions and answers.”

The Earl, having cast his eye over the inscription, exclaimed with eager delight, "Then you are one of the Gordons of I——, no doubt?"

For the first time a cloud passed over the young man's face as he rejoined, a little bitterly,—

"I am one by myself: I am plain George Gordon, only son and only living child of the late Rev. George Gordon, unbenedicted clergyman. I don't know that I ever had a grandfather, but I suppose I had. My father and mother have both been some years dead; and I haven't, to my knowledge, a single relation—named Gordon, at any rate—in the world; and when I leave Oxford, I shall have to work for my living."

The Earl's face and manner underwent a great change. He had evidently received an unpleasant shock; he clearly did his best to conquer a hauteur which was beyond his control; and he attempted to assume quite a satisfied and even delighted air, which completely imposed upon Gordon.

"Ah!" he said, joyously, "it is really quite singular how men get separated somehow from family connections, and quite isolated. I remember there was a man at Christ Church, in my time, in just your position. However, he used to beat us all in everything, from logic to boating. He was a double-first, and afterwards went to the bar, where he was very successful; and everybody used to say that if he hadn't been carried off prematurely by consumption, he would have sat upon the woolsack, and made us all mind our *p*'s and *q*'s."

"Such things *are* to be done," remarked Gordon, cheerily.

"And now," continued the Earl, "may I ask whether you live in this neighbourhood, or whether you are merely visiting,—and in either case, where?"

"Well, you see," replied Gordon, "it is just now 'the long,' and I am spending mine in wandering about from place to place, and mingling amusement with reading,—*utile dulci*; so at present I have put up at 'The Fishers'."

"Then," said the Earl, "the first small favour you can grant me is to take up your quarters here. How soon can you come?"

"I should be delighted," answered Gordon; "but I did not intend to remain hereabouts after to-morrow: I—I——"

"Then," interrupted the Earl, "the landlord of 'The Fishers' will have the less occasion to grumble if I can prevail upon you to change your mind. Try us for a day or two, and we may be able to amuse you sufficiently to make you prolong your visit. But perhaps you have engagements elsewhere——"

"Oh dear, no," Gordon broke in; "I am perfectly free; I only——"

"Then, my dear sir, you have really no excuse: you *must* come."

"If I *must*," said Gordon, laughing, "I cannot struggle against so pleasant a necessity."

"That means you will come. And now I hear sounds which are a favourable omen of approaching luncheon. Let us go and see."

The Earl led the way, and Gordon followed towards the door of a room whence came the music of a piano cunningly handled, and of a voice whereat a bird might have moped for jealousy. As they entered, the music concluded with a piece of decided discord, but Gordon's offended senses were compensated by the sight which met his eyes. Loveliness, in human form, rose up from the music-stool; Grace, in human form, assumed the most becoming of attitudes; Modesty, in human form, stood blushingly expectant; and Pleasure, in human form, spoke silently with sparkling eyes and mobile face. Beside Loveliness stood Dignity, ancient of days, composed of manner, placid of countenance.

"You know these ladies," said the Earl to Gordon; "but let me introduce you formally: my daughter, Caroline, and Miss Egerton, her governess and very kind friend—Mr. Gordon."

Miss Egerton bowed and smiled, but Lady Caroline, advancing with outstretched hand, said with a voice which lifted Gordon out of earth,—

"Mr. Gordon, I have now quite recovered my power of speech, and yet I cannot thank you sufficiently; I—I—"

"Pray do not distress me with thanks," interrupted Gordon; "it seems to me I am one of Fortune's favourites."

"Please do not think me ungrateful," pleaded Lady Caroline, with moistened eyes, "because I am so very silly as not to be able to—to—"

"She wants some luncheon, Mr. Gordon," the Earl broke in, with a smile; "after that she will, no doubt, be equal to the occasion. Will you take that seat? Carrie, I shall want you here."

The four were soon in full conversation, and the chief topic was naturally the great event of the day before. And when Miss Egerton had explained that she was herself about to warn off the trespasser, but had been anticipated by the impulsive Lady Caroline, to whose disobedience and high spirits the catastrophe was due, she concluded with a darkly hinted fear that Gordon's watery adventure might have been attended by loss of watch or other valuables.

"Have you lost anything?" asked Lady Caroline, anxiously.

"N-n-no," replied Gordon, hesitatingly; but he wore so peculiar a look that the Earl prevented him from proceeding, by saying, emphatically,—

"We would have the lake dragged, you know—"

"Oh, really it is of no consequence," interrupted Gordon, "and I only hesitated from a foolish habit of being unnecessarily candid."

"Then you *have* lost something," said the Earl, with a smile; "may I ask what it was?"

"Well," answered Gordon, colouring slightly and looking confused, "it was a paltry little thing in the shape of a heart: you often see such things; they are usually attached to something—a chain or something; but mine was not, and I do not think a jeweller would have pronounced it good gold."

"Oh, a locket, I suppose?" rejoined the Earl, smiling, whilst Lady Caroline seemed to be absorbed in the peeling of some fruit. Miss

Egerton, however, remarked, sentimentally,—“Perhaps Mr. Gordon prized it the more on that account; perhaps it was a souvenir——”

“Oh dear, no,” broke in Gordon, brusquely and almost rudely: “nothing of *that* kind. I found it very lately.”

“Then, papa,” said Lady Caroline, suddenly looking up with a bright smile, “you know I have a bushel of such things, and you might find something to replace Mr. Gordon’s.”

Gordon protested, but the Earl declared it was but fair, adding,—

“There is no hurry, however, as I have persuaded Mr. Gordon to stay with us for a short time.”

“To-morrow, I believe,” began Gordon, but the Earl interrupted him, saying, “To-day, I hope, my dear sir. We will drive over at once to ‘The Fishers’ and fetch your luggage.”

“Then I shall not say good-by,” said Lady Caroline, with a smile of evident pleasure, as she and Miss Egerton passed through the door held open by Gordon.

During the afternoon the Earl, partly driving and partly walking, introduced Gordon to all the beauties of that country seat, which was well named Fairidale.

Only the four who had been at luncheon together sat down to dinner, which the sprightliness of Lady Caroline alone relieved from solemnity, and after dinner the Earl and Gordon were left to wine and dialogue. Gordon’s eyes looked forth upon a hundred acres of green slope, and majestic trees, and shimmering waters that blushed with the tints of sunset; and, in the intervals of conversation, he followed the movements of a white-robed figure which flitted about amongst the flower-beds and along the terrace, and across the lawn, as Lady Caroline paid short visits to her favourites amongst the birds and roses. From time to time a snatch of song came floating on the air from an open window; and from time to time a musical laugh and a plaintive murmur told of Lady Caroline teasing and Miss Egerton remonstrating.

The Earl rose, and standing at the open window called, “Caroline!” and the sweetest of voices responded from a neighbouring open window, “Papa!”

“Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“Oh dear, no, papa; I am only keeping them down, as Miss Egerton keeps me.”

“I must come and restore you to order myself.”

“As soon as ever you please, my dear papa, for Miss Egerton is so dull. But have you finished your wine?” she asked, as she suddenly stood outside upon the terrace and faced her father.

“Yes; we are just having a cup of coffee.”

“*Oι ἔτει οὖν πόσως καὶ ἀηδνός οὗ ἔρον ἵντο κυψέφης θάβον,*” said Lady Caroline, to Gordon’s unbounded astonishment; and then she called out to Miss Egerton,—“*Implentur veteris Bacchi, Guvvy,*” and skipped away to join her governess.

The Earl turned laughingly to Gordon and said,—

" You may well look surprised, Mr. Gordon; but my daughter is receiving a different education from that of most young ladies. Miss Egerton and I have, between us, taught her (but I fear very badly,) some Latin and Greek; and I have taught her almost as much German (which, I regret to say, is very little) as I know myself. Miss Egerton is a lady of very good family and excellent education; we are very, very much indebted to her, but her accomplishments do not include *much* Latin and Greek (why should they?) or any German; and so I fear my daughter, though she is very fond of the classics and of German, does not get the best possible instruction in these respects. It is very difficult to find a lady who could do all I want; and somehow,—especially under the circumstances,—I don't like tutors, and that sort of thing."

Gordon could find nothing better than a commonplace remark at his command, and willingly embraced the Earl's offer of withdrawal from the dining-room.

They found Lady Caroline provided with a store of golden trinkets, from which Gordon was strictly charged to replace his loss by choosing what would please him best.

And he chose the smallest, plainest golden heart. And afterwards he felt as if he were a downright thief: why, will appear from the soliloquy he held that night in bed. In the course of the evening he had said to her, " You are a classical scholar, it appears, Lady Caroline."

" Quite a pundit, I assure you," she had answered archly: " but I fear I should be what you call 'ploughed' at Oxford. Should I not, papa?"

" You had better ask Miss Egerton," answered the Earl, laughing.

" I think Mr. Gordon," said Miss Egerton, primly, " would be the best judge."

" But I have no materials to judge from," rejoined Gordon, smiling. " If Lady Caroline would show me some translations and compositions, if she—"

" You shall see some before you go," interrupted the Earl.

" Oh, pray, papa," exclaimed Lady Caroline, in half-assumed terror, " do not make a shocking example of me."

" You had better make yourself an example of going early to bed," said the Earl: " you look tired to death."

And Lady Caroline and Miss Egerton retired: and after a short interval the Earl and Gordon also retired.

That same night in bed Lady Caroline soliloquized thus:—" Then dreams *do* come true. The handsome stranger *has* arrived and *has* rescued me from imminent danger. I wonder how long he will stay with us?—stay with us?—stay with us?"—and the words seemed to repeat themselves like the burden of a favourite song as she lay and murmured and dozed, till dozing deepened into sound sleep.

Meanwhile Gordon soliloquized thus:—" I have committed downright

theft, and told all but a downright falsehood. What madness led me on ? Surely there is an infatuation against which a man struggles in vain ; and so long as I heard her voice saying, ‘ Have you lost anything ? ’ my tongue could scarcely help replying, ‘ A worthless trifle—a mere nothing—only myself—only my heart—only my soul.’ She filched me from myself across the stream, with her air of goddess, her smile and laugh, and the music of her voice. At the bottom of the stream is nothing such as they fancy : but my only resource was clearly subterfuge. And now I am to have one short peep of Paradise ere I go from bad to worse, from folly to perdition. But let me gather rosebuds while I may—while I may.’ And so he murmured and iterated and dozed, until dozing deepened into sound sleep.

In the course of the next day Gordon did not fail to ask the Earl for a sight of Lady Caroline’s classical translations and compositions, which he found far better than he had expected. Still there were many faults which he pointed out ; the Earl was pleased with his judgment, candour, and modesty.

And Gordon became an authority whose decisions were appealed to when difficulties arose in the course of Lady Caroline’s Greek or Latin or German studies. Now it happened on a day, when the time to which Gordon had been induced to extend his visit had almost elapsed, and when Lady Caroline and Miss Egerton and he were alone, that he took up a collection of German poems. The book opened of itself at a certain page, and there fluttered to the ground a half-sheet of notepaper. The noise attracted the attention of Lady Caroline, who started up with blush and scream, saying, “ That is my paper, if you please, Mr. Gordon.”

Gordon picked it up, and as he handed it to her asked, “ Is it a translation ? ”

“ Perhaps.”

“ May I read it ? ”

“ Certainly not.”

“ I saw the title.”

“ Then that is all you are likely to see, Mr. Gordon. Do you know the original ? ”

“ No : I must content myself with *that*, I suppose. Oh, here it is.”  
Gordon read :—

#### SCHÖN-ROHTRAUT.

Wie heisst König Ringang’s Töchterlein ?

Rohrraut, Schön-Rohrraut.

Was that sie denn den ganzen Tag,

Dass sie wohl nicht spinnen und nähen mag ?

That fischen und jagen.

O dass ich doch ihr Jäger wär’ !

Fischen und jagen freute mich sehr.

—Schweig’ still, mein Herz !

Und über eine kleine Weil’,

Rohrraut, Schön-Rohrraut,

So dient der Knab’ auf Ringang’s Schloss

In Jäger-Tracht und hat ein Ross,

Mit Rohrraut zu jagen.

O dass ich doch ein Königsohn wär’ !

Rohrraut, Schön-Rohrraut lieb’ ich so sehr !

—Schweig’ still, mein Herz !

Einmals sie ruhete am Eichenbaum,  
Da lacht Schön-Rohtraut :  
Was siehst mich an so wunniglich ?  
Wenn du das Herz hast, küsse mich !  
Ach ! erschrak der Knabe !  
Doch denket er, Mir ist's vergunnt,  
Und küsstet Schön-Rohtraut auf den Mund.  
—Schweig' still, mein Herz !

Darauf sie ritten schweigend heim,  
Rohtraut, Schön-Rohtraut ;  
Es jauchzt dem Knab' in seinem Sinn :  
Und würd'st du heute Kaiserin,  
Mich soll's nicht kränken :  
Ihr tausend Blätter im Walde wisst,  
Ich hab' Schön-Rohtraut's Mund geküßt :  
—Schweig' still, mein Herz !

"Upon my word it is a very pretty little ballad," said Gordon, as he rose and gave the volume to Lady Caroline.

"So very simple, is it not?" she asked demurely, as she replaced the translation between the leaves. Then, as Gordon stood by her, she read over the original in soft, low, melodious tones; and when she had finished, she looked up at him, and with a short laugh, said,—

"Ha! ha! how very quaint: wenn Du das Herz hast, küsse mich!" and she sent an eye-shaft to his very soul.

And an irresistible impulse, such as drives men to deeds of heroism or madness, urged Gordon to ask with quivering lips,—

"Vor dem Fräulein?"

Lady Caroline's face grew crimson for a moment, but she did not look displeased, and, as she modestly dropped her eyes upon her book, she softly answered,—

"Um Gotteswillen, nicht!"

Then, turning to Miss Egerton, she said,—

"You eschew German, Guvvy, and so you shall read the translation." And she held out the half-sheet of notepaper whereon was written—

#### FAIR ROHTRAUT.

How hight King Ringang's daughter dear?  
Rohtraut, fair Rohtraut.  
She will nor spin nor sew, they say :  
How passeth she, then, the livelong day ?  
A-fishing and hunting.  
Oh ! fain would I her huntsman be,  
Fishing and hunting 's the sport for me,  
—Lie still, O my heart !

A while, and then in Ringang's halls,  
Rohtraut, fair Rohtraut,  
The stripling serves in hunting garb,  
And gallops a-field on his gallant barb,  
With Rohtraut a-hunting.  
O fain would I a king's son be !  
Rohtraut, fair Rohtraut's so dear to me,  
—Lie still, O my heart !

One day they halted under an oak :  
Out-laughed fair Rohtraut,  
What aileth thee that thou dost stare  
So wistful ? Kiss me, if thou dare !  
Ah ! cried the stripling !  
Then thought—Tis plainly as I list,  
And on the lips fair Rohtraut kiss'd.  
—Lie still, O my heart !

Homeward they rode with never a word,  
Rohtraut, fair Rohtraut ;  
But the stripling's heart made joyous sound :  
And wert thou now an empress crown'd  
'Twould be no matter :  
Ye thousand leaves of the forest wist,  
When Rohtraut on the lips I kiss'd ?  
—Lie still, O my heart !

Miss Egerton returned the paper, after reading it, and merely remarked,—“I cannot say how it is translated, my dear, as I do not understand German, but it seems to me silly enough in English.” And she coughed a dry cough of discontent at things in general.

Gordon had spent a heavenly "long," but it had at last come to an end. There was no more riding, driving, boating, croquet, and archery, at which he could be near Lady Caroline, and enjoy the distinguished consideration of such guests and visitors as were informed of his exploit. But before he left for Oxford the Earl had said to him,—

"Mr. Gordon, we must not lose sight of one another. I shall make it my business to keep up our acquaintance; and if my influence—and I think I may say I have some—can ever promote your views, remember it is at your service. My daughter, too, I am sure, will never forget what she owes you, and she will probably some day be able to exert more power than I can."

At the last words Gordon's face flushed painfully, but he managed to stammer his acknowledgments. As he travelled to Oxford, however, he thought within himself,—"This Earl evidently thinks that we poor commoners, without any pedigree or lands to show, may be in mind as capable as himself and in soul as liable to eternal happiness or misery as himself; but we are of different flesh and blood. And so she is to be my patroness, my Lady Bountiful, and yet—" and a never-to-be-forgotten scene came vividly before him.

It was the day after he had read "*Schön-Rohtraut*:" Lady Caroline and he were standing together beneath a spreading oak; there was no one near, and he said, a little tremulously,—

"It is an oak; the situation is perfect; and the hour has come."

"What do you mean?" Lady Caroline asked with a voice that feigned surprise, though eyes, and smile, and blush, betrayed understanding and expectation.

"Ich hab' *Schön-Rohtraut*'s Mund geküßt," answered Gordon, after proving the truth of his assertion, and Lady Caroline did not resist: but at a second attempt she drew back laughing, and holding out forbiddingly a hand which was to him a barrier more formidable than an iron fence, said,—

"No, sir, no: we must keep to the ballad, which does not go beyond once."

Then Miss Egerton appeared upon the scene; and it seemed as if the light of life had gone out.

There had been but one meeting of the lips; but the memory of one such meeting abides for ever: and whilst Gordon's fellow-students were thinking what a lucky man he was to have gained the friendship and interest of an Earl, his heart was singing one continual little song:—"Ich hab' *Schön-Rohtraut*'s Mund geküßt."

At Christmas and at Easter following, the Earl did not forget the vacations; and on each occasion Gordon spent a week or so at the Earl's. And so things went on for nearly two years.

Now, when nearly two years had elapsed from the date of the rescue, and a third "long" was approaching, the vigilant Miss Egerton observed upon one of Lady Caroline's fingers an unfamiliar ring, and on Lady Caroline's part a feverish interest in all that related to Oxford. And the

good lady grew alarmed ; and the consequence of her alarm was that, after watching Lady Caroline closely, and after skilfully leading her on to talk, there was a long interview between Miss Egerton and the Earl ; and afterwards the Earl was greatly disturbed, and sent for his daughter to join him in his study.

After the lapse of more than an hour Lady Caroline came out pale and tearful, but with an air of resolution, and even triumph.

The Earl sat and meditated, and meditated almost until the sun went down. Then he hastily wrote a note, which he bade a servant carry as quickly as possible to Oxford, which was not very far from Fairidale, and might be reached, under favourable circumstances, in an hour.

That same night Gordon, for whom the Earl's letter had been sufficient to gain leave of absence, arrived at Fairidale. He was full of amazement and misgiving as he was admitted by the friendly Dawson. Lady Caroline and Miss Egerton had already retired, and Gordon was at once shown into the Earl's study. The Earl greeted him kindly but sadly.

" You must be astonished, Mr. Gordon," he said, " at my begging you to come immediately on the receipt of my note ; but if you will take this seat I will explain."

Gordon sat down boding ill, for the Earl had begun latterly to call him familiarly Gordon, and now he had resumed the ceremonious Mister.

" First let me tell you," continued the Earl, smiling, " nobody is ill ; nobody is suspected of any crime ; nobody has quarrelled ; and nobody wishes to quarrel."

Gordon smiled faintly, but still boded ill.

" You will be good enough, perhaps," the Earl went on, " to hear without interruption what I have next to say. I have discovered how matters stand between you and my daughter, and I frankly confess I am extremely sorry, and not a little disappointed. What has happened was quite natural, perhaps ; and, probably, I am more to blame than anybody else ; but I am free to say in my own defence that I had mistaken both your character and my daughter's. Whether I gave you both credit for more of a certain excellent quality than you either of you possess, or whether I attributed to you both less of a certain other quality than you each of you possess, I shall not declare. I am so deeply indebted to you that I cannot upbraid you ; indeed, I am not at all sure that you have done anything with which I could upbraid anybody."

Here the Earl sighed deeply, and paused so long that Gordon thought he might speak, and asked, in a low voice, but with fast utterance,— " Can you upbraid the iron for moving towards the magnet ? "

" Just so," muttered the Earl under his breath. " The old story—the old madness." Then raising his voice, he continued : " I have reason to believe, Mr. Gordon, that you are an honourable gentleman. Why was there this want of openness ? "

" Want of openness ? " exclaimed Gordon, indignantly. " Is it usual or right to proclaim upon the housetops that you love with heart and soul

and strength, and that, though you have never yet dared—for fear of too great a shock—to ask, you have reason to believe that your love is returned? Is it usual or right to make public those few words which mean nothing at all and yet so much? Is it usual or right to publish abroad that there may have been—just once—a—a—something?"

"I think I understand you," interrupted the Earl. "Still, you gave my daughter a ring."

"And she wore it openly," broke in Gordon, proudly and triumphantly.

"She did," said the Earl, quietly; "and it led indirectly to my knowledge of the present state of affairs. I will take it for granted, Mr. Gordon, that anything which appears to me like purposed concealment and clandestine behaviour was due only to natural causes, such as diffidence, doubt, and the like. And now I am going to put you to a severe trial. There are few men with whom I should feel it safe to deal as I mean to with you. I am going to throw myself entirely upon your generosity and sense of honour."

Gordon bowed; and the Earl resumed, saying—"You believe you love my daughter."

Gordon started, and would have interrupted, but the Earl held up his hand deprecatingly, and continued: "Well, well, you *do* love my daughter. Then you would make some sacrifice for her?"

"Of all my present and all my future," was the solemn answer.

"Now," said the Earl, "do me the favour of listening to me patiently, and, if you can, put yourself in my place. If I had other children, upon my honour I would not oppose the course events have taken. My influence and your own talents would secure to you as much wealth and position as might satisfy both of us. But Caroline is my only child. At my death my titles and estates pass to my nephew, Arthur. If Caroline were to marry Arthur, my name, my titles, and my estates would still be, in a manner, hers; and by her, if she had children, might be continued on and on, as they have been continued for three centuries down to my time. I may be a weak fool, as philosophers would think, but, my dear Gordon, believe me when I say that my name, and my titles, and my estates seem to me a sacred trust received from my ancestors, which I am bound by every honourable means to hand down as nearly as possible, according to their theory and practice. My family seems to me to be still living in the very soil of our lands, and our vital principle seems to me to be infused in the sap of our trees and the waters of our streams; and the idea of lopping off, as it were, one principal limb from a noble body, and of cutting off, as it were, a main source of continuous supply, is to me sacrilegious and intolerable. And until your—within a very few months I mean—Arthur and Caroline appeared likely to voluntarily bestow their hearts as it had been proposed that their hands should be bestowed. I well know the power of the master-passion which causes man to make light of all obstacles, and laugh at all prejudices, and blaspheme all conventionalities. But then love, you know, is blind.

Caroline is now eighteen, and what does eighteen know of life? May not the day come when she will find, perhaps, that she has inherited all my notions; when she will begin to doubt whether it is better to follow inclination than reason; when she may discover that it is harder than she thought to conquer or bear what she might easily have escaped? The world is cruel to those who set it at defiance; and is it not well to consider whether defiance be a religious necessity before you begin to defy? And might not you yourself some day reproach yourself, when remorse would whisper that reproach came all too late?"

The Earl ceased, and there was a silence of some minutes, whilst Gordon turned up and down in his mind what had been said, and let his thoughts wander into a dreamland where all was sunshine, and into a dreamland where all was dark as Erebus.

Suddenly the Earl spoke again—

"After all," he said, gently, "you are both very young. Time heals all wounds; and, perhaps," he added, smiling, "you are neither of you very badly hurt."

And Gordon muttered, so that the Earl did not catch his words,—

"One, my lord, to the death."

Then there was another silence of some minutes' duration, and afterwards Gordon rose and said,—

"It may be, my lord, that you are right; and I cannot bear to take even a slender risk of wrecking Lady Caroline's future. You shall not find me a stumbling-block: good-night and good-by; you shall not see my face, so far as I can help it, again."

"Come, come, Gordon," rejoined the Earl, softly; "this is carrying matters a little too far."

"I can't see her again," broke in Gordon, passionately; "if I see her, I cannot depend upon myself."

"We must be friends," said the Earl; "believe me you will live to smile at all this, and now you had better go to your room—you will find your usual room ready for you. It is so late, you couldn't get in at 'The Fishers' if you tried."

Gordon hesitated a moment, then took his candle, and, with a brief "good-night," went (for the last time he thought sorrowfully) to the well-remembered chamber.

To sleep was, of course, impossible; and so soon as he could do so, without rousing the household, he dressed himself hastily, hurried downstairs, and prepared to depart. He looked into the lovely garden, and almost unconsciously walked out upon the lawn and strolled listlessly up to the pretty summer-house which faced away from him towards the momentous stream. He turned round the corner to enter the summer-house, and stood pale and trembling as one who sees a fearful vision.

Yet there had been only a cry of delight, and a tearful face had brightened at his presence, and a divine figure had sprung forward to greet him. For Lady Caroline, too, had passed a sleepless night, and

had come down to sit where she might court the cool breezes as she wept and confided her sorrows to the rising sun. Her happy look was soon exchanged for one of concern as she remarked how Gordon was troubled at her presence.

"Are you ill?" she asked, anxiously.

Gordon shook his head, and uttered a scarcely audible "No."

"When did you arrive?"

"Late last night."

"Papa did not say you were coming," she said, musingly; and then she added, in piteous, long-drawn tones, "Oh! you—are—in—some—trouble." And she laid her two hands on Gordon's arm, and gazed pleadingly and inquiringly into his face.

Then Gordon silently prayed for strength to carry out his purpose; for surely the eyes which were looking so steadily into his made frank and eloquent confession of love.

"Would you help me," he asked, sadly, "if I were?"

"Would I? Oh! so gladly," she answered. "I owe you my life, you know; and you could not well ask more."

"Then you will not refuse what may seem to *you* a far more trivial request," he rejoined, in low and tremulous tones. "You will not refuse to bid me begone, and never see you again."

She turned to stone; her hands dropped down from Gordon's arm; her eyes looked rigidly fixed; all colour fled from her cheeks and lips. A little while, and she was alive again. She once more clasped her hands upon Gordon's arm, and said, half playfully,—

"Tell me what you mean. Have you committed some fearful crime?"

"Yes," answered Gordon, gloomily.

She did not take her hands from his arm, but simply whispered,—

"Oh, no—no—no! What is it you call a crime?"

"I have presumed to love beyond my sphere. I have dared to climb without thinking of falling myself, or—which is worse—of pulling down some one else," he answered, as if he were repeating a well-known lesson.

"Is that all?" she asked, in a tone of indifference.

Then Gordon summoned all powers that be to aid him, as he said, tremulously,—

"Lady Caroline, you remember the ballad of 'Schön-Rohtraut'?"

"Particularly well," she replied, with mingled archness and plaintiveness. "I translated it for Miss Egerton's benefit."

"How do you think the romance ended?" he asked, slowly.

"I cannot imagine," she answered, faintly.

"I have fancied the sequel," he said. "Will you hear my version?"

"Yes," she answered, in a half whisper.

"I think," continued Gordon, not daring to look towards her, for fear his purpose should fail, "that there must have been in that oak-tree

a little bird that told the king all that the leaves of the forest knew, and even more than that. And the king was very angry, and sent for his daughter and questioned her. And she of her noble nature scorned to hide anything from the king. And he was then both angry and grieved, and with threats and tears commanded and besought her to dismiss that impudent page from her service and her thoughts. And she—she—I know not what she did."

"Would have died, rather," interrupted Lady Caroline, under her breath.

But Gordon, as if he heard not—only his broken voice bore witness he had heard—went on,—

"And the page, though he was not a king's son, had no ignoble soul; and, when it became clear to his understanding that Schön-Rohtraut could not give him her hand but with loss of rank, and wealth, the world's esteem, her father's love, her kinsmen's regard, and at the risk of possible regret hereafter, when she awoke some day from her girlhood's dream, he did not presume on that one sweet kiss; he sought not even to know whether Schön-Rohtraut loved him; he preferred to die rather than ask Schön-Rohtraut to sacrifice aught for *him*; and he vanished into obscurity after his short glitter, like a shooting-star on a November night. And Schön-Rohtraut, even if she really loved him, remembered that *noblesse oblige*, that princesses and the like must not only enjoy, but suffer, if need be, more than others; and—"

"If it broke her heart?" struck in the soft, sad, wailing voice of Lady Caroline, who had gradually sunk down upon a seat, whilst Gordon knelt upon one knee beside her in the earnestness of his speech.

"Yes," answered Gordon, firmly but hoarsely, "the greater the sacrifice the greater the nobility. And he, according to my version, if he ever knew for certain that he was loved, was contented to die daily, solaced by the remembrance of Schön-Rohtraut's love, and by the consciousness of being worthy to be numbered amongst those of whom it might be said that 'noblesse oblige'."

"And she?" asked Lady Caroline, faintly.

"She," answered Gordon sadly, "was the joy of his life to some noble prince; was the light of his eyes to her royal father; was the tender mother of princely children; was the pride and ornament of a loyal household; and sometimes when she thought of the brief romance of her early days, gave to the poor page's memory the tribute of a sigh—all he would have desired, all he would have deserved."

Then he sprang to his feet and said, hurriedly,—

"But it is time for me to go: good-by, Lady Caroline, g—good-by."

She held out her hand helplessly: he raised it respectfully to his lips, and there broke from him one great sob as he turned away. A painful moan smote on his ear, and drove him like lightning to the house, whence he despatched the scared Miss Egerton, as if at Lady Caroline's request. What breakfast he could swallow, he took with the Earl in the study; and,

before leaving, he explained to the Earl that there had been an accidental meeting with Lady Caroline, and that what the Earl so much feared might be considered at an end. The Earl was much affected, and as he shook Gordon's not very willing hand at departure, said,—“Depend upon it, my dear Gordon, time will set all this right : you have behaved as honourably and generously, as I felt sure you would ; remember that I am always your friend, and that you may command my services.”

“And have it thought, if not said,” rejoined Gordon fiercely, “that I traded on my—my—love ; that I had more head than heart ; that I preferred my interests to my affections ; *that* is not very likely, my lord.”

He walked hastily away.

The old Earl stood for a moment as one thunderstruck ; then he returned to his study as he muttered, with a sigh, “God bless me ! *That* never occurred to me. Poor fellow ! poor fellow !”

Lady Caroline pondered on all that Gordon had said, believed that he had not spoken altogether from his heart, and drew, in her own mind, of her own intelligence, a pretty accurate picture of all that had occurred.

Then she fell grievously ill ; and for a long while, at every visit the Earl paid her, she vouchsafed him no other greeting than, “Oh, cruel ! cruel !” and turned her face away from him ; so that the Earl had his own misery to bear.

But, by-and-by, as she lay and thought of Gordon suffering and bearing up as best he might, and as she reflected upon what he had said, she felt some comfort in the idea of a communion of sorrow ; she owned that there was something, to a certain extent, noble and sensible in the course he had commended, and her heart consequently softened towards her father, to whom she said, as she lifted her head from her pillow one day, “Kiss me, dear papa ; I am convinced you meant well.”

The Earl was very glad, and his face grew cheerful, and his spirits came back to him. The household soon resumed its usual aspect ; Lady Caroline moved like a sunbeam about the house, and she was more beautiful than day, but less sprightly than before.

Gordon's ring was returned to him ; he sent back what presents he had received from Lady Caroline, and amongst them a simple golden heart wrapped in a paper on which was written, “What was stolen is restored ; the enclosed was obtained under false pretences ; at the bottom of the stream in Fairdale park George Gordon has left nothing but his heart of hearts.” Howbeit, he retained unintentionally a little prayer-book which he had mislaid and forgotten, and did not light upon until it seemed too late to send it back. It had been lent to him by Lady Caroline with a playful injunction to keep it if he had not one of his own ; so he had held it sacred, and had begged Mrs. Gawton to do with it as she had done. When Mrs. Gawton had mentioned it, Lady Caroline had remembered it, and, hearing of its fate, had been glad with a melancholy gladness.

Time passed, and Arthur came and went, and Lady Caroline and he were the best of friends. At last Arthur showed her all his heart and would fain give it up to her and receive hers in exchange, although he confessed that he would get *ἰκαρόμποι' ἵννεαβοιων*. But she, of her simplicity and noble candour, explained to him that it was she who would receive hundredworths for nineworths, for that she had but a fraction of a heart to give; still, if that would content him, she would throw in with it hand and honour and sincere esteem. Arthur was glad to consent; for he felt that he could win back to her her whole heart, and win it from her to himself. Not to Lady Caroline but to the Earl, from whom he had the whole story, he even made light of poor Gordon's romance, and held that every vestige of it would vanish as the circumstances of an unsubstantial dream.

So Arthur and Lady Caroline were married. The old Earl died.

And it happened one day, as the young Earl and Countess were at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, that the Countess suddenly turned deadly pale, and whispered to her husband,—

“ Oh ! . . . Arthur ! there is Mr. Gordon, and—he saved my life ! ”

She looked pleadingly and inquiringly at her husband, who quickly banished an involuntary frown, and said quietly and soothingly :—

“ Of course you must speak to him : introduce me.”

Gordon had seen her, and would have moved away, but he could not stir, and stood gazing at a picture as if he were spell-bound with admiration ; but his eyes saw nothing beyond a blur of colours, and in his ears there was a buzzing of strange noises. At a light touch he turned round ; and at the sound of a voice which still haunted his slumbers he stood bareheaded and reverential, and mechanically took for a second the proffered hand, and listened as one would listen to a voice from heaven, as the Countess murmured the simple words, “ How do you do, Mr. Gordon ? We are so glad to have met you.”

Gordon put the usual counter-question, and the Countess introduced him to the Earl, adding, “ You know how deeply I am indebted to Mr. Gordon.”

The two men bowed ; a few commonplaces were exchanged ; the Earl talked fluently and *debonairly* ; the Countess and Gordon spoke chiefly in monosyllables ; the situation became trying ; it was, fortunately, time for the Earl and his wife to take leave ; and Gordon was once more alone —in a crowd.

The Earl had been friendly, and even cordial, but both he and the Countess had instinctively felt that they could not ask Gordon to call upon them. And Gordon had felt that he should not, and could not, and would not for worlds be asked ; for, setting everything else aside, it was well known to both the Earl and Countess that Gordon sedulously kept out of their way, and had persistently and jealously declined whatever advantages had been put in his way by the old Earl or themselves, by his or their influence. They never met again.

The more Gordon had seen of life, the more he felt convinced that he had acted for the best, if not for himself, for her whom he prized far beyond himself. It would have been unfair, he felt, to have caused enmity between father and daughter, and to have dragged her from the sphere where she shone as the moon amongst the lesser planets. She had been hardly old enough to know her own mind ; and he grew to almost wish that she might come to regard him only as a pleasant memory, and their dalliance only as a tale that is told. It was different with him ; he had caught a glimpse of paradise, and could no longer find comfort on earth : he had dared to kiss the lips of a goddess, and must be content to die. He knew that she had suffered, and that was triumph enough for him : he would have been almost glad to know that her suffering had left no trace, that her wound had left no scar. He felt a sense of relief when he read of her marriage with Arthur ; and he would have felt he had gained his reward had he read that she was a mother.

But that was not to be.

He had lain some weeks in his grave, when the Countess had sighed, as she rang for her maid, "And then shall I love him more ?"

Several weeks were still to elapse before an answer came to the "when ?" and the "whom ?" But the answer did come in due time, when the Countess lay smiling with a babe in her arms, and gazing up at her husband with glistening eyes.

"What name shall we give him ?" the Earl had said.

"Arthur, of course," was the prompt reply.

"And a few more," said the Earl, smiling. "Arthur Gordon would do for two."

There was a significance which could not be mistaken in the Earl's tone, and his wife's eyes filled with tears as she said,— "Arthur, you are the noblest creature in the world ; and I love you more than tongue can tell. Let him be Arthur Gordon, and nothing else."

So the son and heir was named Arthur Gordon ; and the Gordons of I—— thought how kind it was of "the dear Countess" to pay them this little attention, seeing that they were but second-cousins !

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## Out of Eden.

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AGAIN the summer comes, and all is fair;  
 A sea of tender blue, the sky o'erhead  
 Stretches its peace ; the roses, white and red,  
 Through the deep silence of the trancéd air,  
 In a mute ecstasy of love declare  
 Their souls in perfume, while their leaves are fed  
 With dew and moonlight that fall softly shed  
 Like slumber on pure eyelids unaware.

O wasted affluence of scent and light !  
 Each gust of fragrance smites me tauntingly ;  
 Yon placid stars have rankling shafts for me ;  
 My great despair, by its own fatal might,  
 Converts to pain the loveliness of night.  
 Ah, would I could from all this beauty flee,  
 And, 'neath some gray sky on a cheerless sea,  
 Let drift a life that cannot end aright.

Vain flower of fame from which is gone the scent,  
 Vain crown no longer glorious in mine eyes,  
 Vain hopes at which, years back, my joy would rise  
 Like melody within an instrument  
 When skilled hands touch the strings. All now is spent,  
 And what is gained ? Lo, I have gained my prize,  
 And here neglected at my feet it lies ;  
 It meant so much : I now ask what it meant.

For thee, lost love, I shall not see again ;  
 The pale sad beauty of thy tender face,  
 Once lamp and light of this now starless place,  
 Comes to me in my dreams, and I am fain  
 To hold thee in my arms, and so retain  
 Thy phantom form in one long wild embrace ;  
 A flush illumines the features of dead days,  
 But fades before the lights in heaven wane.

I am as one who, in a festive hall  
 Ablaze with glow of flowers and cresset fires,  
 Hears from a hundred joy-begetting lyres  
     A storm of music roll from wall to wall,  
     Yet feels no joy upon his spirit fall,  
 For all the while his wandering heart desires  
 One small sweet waif of sound those pealing quires  
     May scorn—may drown, but never can recall.

Yea, seem I like that fabled king of old  
 Who gained his wish, and woke one morn—and, lo !  
 With gold his bed and chamber were aglow,  
     And when his glad arms did his child enfold,  
     He clasped but to his heart a form of gold—  
 Gold roses in her breast, no more of snow,  
 Gold hair upon her gold and polished brow,  
     Hard, bright the hands of which his hands took hold.

But from her golden trance he saw her wake,  
 Saw life and bloom return to all the flowers ;  
 Green grew again and fresh the wind-stirred bowers,  
     And from its golden frost was freed the lake ;  
     But, though I drain my heart for *my* love's sake,  
 She will not come to make my waste of hours  
 Fruitful as earth beneath warm sun and showers,  
     Nor quick with scent *my* scentless roses make.

Dear soul, to-night our wedding-night had been,  
 And death has come to you and fame to me ;  
 The summer's breath makes music in the tree,  
     Its kiss with over-love has charred the green,  
     Through quivering boughs I catch night's starry sheen,  
 A sense of unborn music seems to be  
 In air and moonlight falling tenderly,  
     And yet I draw no sweetness from the scene.

O love, sweet love, my first, my only love,  
 How can I find the flowering meadows sweet  
 That no more feel the kisses of your feet !  
     O silent heart that grief no more can move,  
     O loved and loving lips, whereto mine clove  
 Till hope; long stanch, with thy heart's muffled beat  
 Furled his lorn flag and made his last retreat,  
     And all was void below, and dark above.

Pale form, they should have clothed thee like a bride,  
Have twined a bridal chaplet round thy head,  
And decked thy cold grave as a marriage-bed ;  
For, though the envious darkness do thee hide,  
I still shall find thee, sweet, and by thy side  
Lie peaceful down while hands and lips shall wed,  
And winds, attuned to lays of love we said,  
Float o'er the stillness where we twain abide.

But now the gulf between us, love, is deep ;  
I labour yet a little in the fight,  
And bear the outrage of the joyous light,  
I toil by day and in the night I sleep,  
And then my heart gets ease, for I can weep ;  
But you in starless, songless depths of night,  
With dreamless slumber shed upon your sight,  
Rest where none need to sow, or care to reap.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

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## Little Paupers.\*

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ONE day, some months ago, I was walking along one of those old-fashioned lanes that still run a little way out of the Kensington thoroughfare,—dear old zigzag lanes and winding passages, that are fast falling before the inspirations of Improvement with her parallel lines. There is one corner still left undisturbed, with some trees casting their shade over a few old rambling houses and garden walls, where you may hear a crowing and clucking of poultry, a chirruping of birds in the branches, and where you may still recall, if you will, a bygone country tradition. It was here I met a procession I shall not easily forget. Wearily it toiled along, dragging and lagging and slowly advancing up the lane, a stricken little company of “workhouse children out for a half-holiday,” so I was told, and returning to the workhouse from whence it had come. They were not Kensington children, but orphans from another parish, of which the Union stands in Kensington. Poor little wretches in pinafors and poke-bonnets and fustian, with heavy yellow faces and lagging steps. One or two of the passers-by stopped to look after them. A maid-servant came to a garden-gate. “They *do* look bad,” she said. As they went by I saw heavy heads tied up ; a sling or two ; dull, indifferent faces ; lame and shuffling feet. There was a taint in the air. Some of the smaller children were draggling at the arms of the elder girls. I do not remember any one of them looking up as they passed. The very youngest of all was in a perambulator, slowly pushed along at the head of this doomed and battered little column.

I was told afterwards that these particular children were soon to be sent to a country school, where it is to be hoped the bandages may be loosened, and the weary burden of life lightened from their poor little backs. Perhaps it may be removed altogether : for when I remember how crushed and how hopeless they looked, it seems difficult to think that for these little creatures much youth or strength or life can be in store in any country place, no matter how pleasant.

Since seeing these children go by, and exchanging looks of sympathy with the maid-servant, the writer of this article has fallen in with one or two persons interested in the welfare of these poor little prisoners of fate.

As for their previous history there is little variety in it. Some of them have come from outside, from some dismal slum ; others are the baby-paupers of paupers’ children—*l’onde sous l’onde dans une mer sans fond.*

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\* *A Practical Guide to the Boarding-out System.* By Col. E. W. GRANT, C.E. Knight and Co., Fleet Street. *Children of the State : The Training of Juvenile Paupers.* By FLORENCE HILL. Macmillan and Co.

We all of us know the look of the slip-shodden squaws and gins whose gaunt faces line our London bricks. Who has not watched them now and again as they come shuffling up some narrow passage, out of a mystery of rags and darkness into the bustling thoroughfare ? They hobble a few paces ; they look round a little bewildered ; and presently they stop, for they have come to a swing-door, by which, alas, no angels with flaming swords stand ready to thrust them out. It is only at the doors of paradise that the repelling angels wait ; these swing-doors open wide at a touch, and within them are warmth and life and strength—three pennyworth at a time. What does it matter “that the children are cowering in the ashes at home, the boy lying naked on the vermin-bed ?”—the swing-doors open wide, and the wretched creatures shuffle in and pay away their pence, their mothers’ love, their self-respect, for the fatal little glassfuls of comfort in their life-trouble. One day it is their life they give, and then their trouble is over ; for the parish will bury them, and the relieving-officer comes, and the neighbours stand round the door of the empty cellar from whence the children are carried off to the workhouse. . . .

Henceforth the State—a sort of Jupiter-like parent—is the only one they have to look to for love, or sympathy, or care. It is not unkind, perhaps kinder than the real one, but then it has no eyes or voice, and knows not its children apart. It does not refuse them the cup of cold water—a tin cup, so that they shall not break it. It clothes them, all alike, in blue stripe and poke-bonnets, and fustian caps and coats. It feeds them—on gruel and suet-pudding. It takes them in—by hundreds in a dormitory. The children grow up in a place where one day is like another, where dull hour follows hour, where they watch yards upon yards of blue stripe, basons after basons of water-gruel passing through the wards from year’s end to year’s end. It cannot be helped ; these are not individuals, but children of the State, machine-made paupers growing up for the market. They can only be marshalled by rule. They have book-learning, but life-learning is unknown to them ; and the best learning of all, love and usefulness, and the kindly play of interest, and the faith of home, its peaceful rest and helpful strength, is a mystery as little dreamt of by them as the secret of heaven itself is by us. How can they love this abstract parent of theirs ? can they honour and succour it ? That is for the nobility and ratepayers perhaps, but not for them. If they have one dream, it is a dream of liberty and escape from the rigid rule that confines them ; of going out into the world and seeing for themselves.

The day comes at last that they have looked for, and they are set free ; happy if they have escaped the contagion of evil talk and ways that spreads like a curse in the workhouse. They are handed over to some mistress who has come to ask for a drudge, and then they discover that liberty means the run of some wretched lodging-house, a struggle, late at night and early in the morning, over the commonest things of life. They break the crockery ; they have been used to tin cups and wooden bowls, and they do not know how to handle brittle things. They

lose themselves if they are sent on a message, and come home wild and frightened. They scarcely understand what is said to them ; they scarcely try to listen. Everything is new, everything is terrible and difficult, and the harried mistress of three flights of discomfort and struggle bears with them for a time perhaps, and one day in despair gives them warning and turns them away. Warning ! who is there to give them a warning and a helping hand ? Do the good Lion and Unicorn come to protect these poor little Unas on their way through the sorrowful forest where wild beasts are prowling—hyænas, wild cats, serpents, and poisoned reptiles. Alas and alas ! the Lion and the Unicorn are up in their places on the organ-lofts and the shop-fronts and public offices ; and the fate of these poor children is almost too sad to speak of.

When you meet the little maid-of-all-work again, it is a hardened and callous creature, whom you may vainly try to interest or touch. She has no ears to hear, no eyes to see. What is there to touch ? Who has ever loved her ? Who is the worse for her offending ? What has she got to lose or to hold by ? It is too late now to hope that she can be a child again.

Miss Hill, in her admirable little book, quotes a letter from the Secretary of the Rescue Society, accounting for the small proportion of workhouse girls admitted into the Society's homes. "It must be borne in mind," she says, "that our judgment is always opposed to the reception of workhouse cases, from their comparative hopelessness." Workhouse they are—to workhouse they return. "The young women who have grown up in a workhouse" (I am again quoting from *Children of the State*) "form a class proverbial for audacity and shamelessness. The chaplain rarely visits them, conscious that they are beyond his influence ; although it must be admitted that there are instances in which the most obdurate have yielded to the appeals and judicious sympathy of benevolent women. Punishment only renders them more defiant. A year or two ago an outburst of the noisiest insubordination (and those only who have heard can realize its horror) was apologetically accounted for by the master, who said, 'You see, sir, they are the girls who have been brought up in the house.'"

Miss Twining's words, quoted by Miss Hill, are very earnest and melancholy to read. She speaks, as the characteristics of paupers, of a total want of gratitude and affection towards individuals. "They are perfectly well acquainted," she says, "with their 'rights' as to maintenance by their parishes and reception into the workhouses. Above the age of sixteen they are completely their own mistresses, and can go in or take their discharge whenever and for whatever cause they choose. . . . An officer connected with the large pauper-school at Swinton in Lancashire, being asked what proportion of the girls sent forth from that establishment, as compared with the daughters of artisans, had taken to bad courses, answered, 'Do not ask me. It is so painful that I can hardly tell you the extent to which evil will predominate in those proceeding from our

institution.' And a similar statement was made by the officer of Kirkdale separate school."\*

The best solutions to the most complicated problems are always the most simple ones. The system which Miss Hill and her friends are advocating is merely a return to the first rudiments of Divine political economy. Instead of massing children together and allowing them to grow up in communities, the advocates of the boarding-out system urge the great advantages of individual care and interest. A small local committee is formed, the guardians are applied to for permission to put the children out to homes approved of by them as well as by the association. Each member of the committee undertakes to befriend one or more of the little boarders, and to send in a regular report; a list is kept, a small subscription paid. This is all the machinery that is required. The money which the children would cost the State in the Union is given to some respectable person, who undertakes to be foster-parent to the orphan. From all experience, the plan seems to answer admirably, and the child appears to be usually treated as a member of the family, to cast its lot with the protectors who have been found for it. I was speaking, the other day, to a relieving-officer at Eton, who evidently had the scheme at heart. He told me that the plan was first tried at Slough, some years ago (it seems to have sprung up almost simultaneously in different parts of the country). He said that the guardians had found that the boys and girls they sent out from their schools invariably returned to them again: that they were totally unfitted for earning a respectable livelihood; it was in vain that outfits were given, situations found—the children were too ignorant and *scared* to retain them; and, after trying the experiment of sending them to some distant district school, from whence they were withdrawn after a time, having all been attacked with a contagious disease of the eyes, it was determined by the guardians to board them out with any respectable persons who would be willing to undertake them.

\* Not long ago an appeal from the Rev. Thomas Quick was published in the *Tablet*. He had put out about fifty orphans, who were going on well and satisfactorily; when the Manchester guardians, by refusing to extend further relief to orphan children, compelled half of them to be sent to Swinton workhouse. "Out of these 50 orphans, about one-half belong to the Chorlton Union. With these I have little difficulty, as the board of guardians, in their desire to advance and improve the condition of these poor orphans—and to lessen the rates—allow me a reasonable support. Would that the Manchester guardians would act in like manner. It seems strange that they prefer sending an orphan to Swinton, where it will cost them from 6s. to 7s. per week, rather than give me 3s., or a relative 2s.; to say nothing of the advantages, nay, the natural obligation of giving a child, if possible, a home or domestic training and education, where its affections will be developed, its self-reliance strengthened, and feelings of independence implanted in its mind. Of these 50 orphans 20 are at work, but not earning as yet their entire support; 30 are attending our day-school. Morning and evening they are taught domestic duties in the homes in which they reside, thus the sooner to qualify them for work or service." "It would seem such an easy solution," says the lady who sends me the extract, "of the difficulty of bringing up Roman Catholic children in the faith of their parents."

"The cost of the children in the house (including the salaries of the officials, etc.), can scarcely be less than 6s. or 7s. a week," said Mr. ——. "We allow 8s. 6d. a week to the foster-parents, and also 6s. 6d. a quarter for clothes, etc."

This is a higher rate of payment than that which I believe is made at Bath and Bristol, where three shillings a week only is allowed. But people are willing to take the children without pecuniary profit, and come forward—childless couples, old maids, widows. One can imagine a hundred silent homes that the presence of a child would brighten, and where the helplessness of the poor little pauper, and the lonely regrets of the foster-parent together, might make a happiness for both. Nature certainly intended children to be the vent for many and many a sorrow and remorse. Among them lies most especially the dominion of women. Are we dull, ugly, shabby, neglected—what does it matter to them? No queen is more paramount than a mother in her nursery. Even foster arms may close with a tender all-satisfied clasp. It seems as if children were made naturally and unconsciously selfish and trustful to complete the parent's gift of tender devotion. Miss Hill, and Mr. Archer, and Colonel Grant, who have all written on the subject, unite in saying that the very greatest care should be taken in the selection of these homes and foster-parents. But when these are carefully chosen, and when, in addition to official machinery, there are superintending ladies, one to each child, it must be almost impossible for anything to go very seriously wrong. "You can almost tell by the children's faces if anything is amiss," the relieving-officer said, to whom I applied. In Colonel Grant's *Practical Guide*, there are some excellent rules for the guidance of lady visitors: among other things he warns them against very frequent visits. Miss Hill gives several illustrations of the way in which foster-parents attach themselves to the orphans under their care. In Glasgow, a child who had been put to board with a woman in that district was found to have its settlement in Edinburgh, whither the parochial board directed that it should be removed. "The foster-mother, hearing that the child was to be taken from her, repaired in the greatest distress to Mr. Beattie, and besought him to obtain a reversal of the order. He explained to her that this was impossible: when, with tears streaming down her cheeks, she implored him to let her keep the child as her own, without payment, for part from it she could not; and it was accordingly adopted by her."

The author then goes on to give a clear and carefully elaborated history of the efforts that are being made to relieve these children of the State. Her story is told forcibly and simply. It comes home with all the eloquence of a true woman's sympathy for the weak and the ill-used, and her little book almost seems like a window thrown open in a dark and bewildering and over-crowded place, where everybody is talking at once, and running about and tumbling over everybody else. There is a pure breath of the fresh air, of common sense and rational charity.

One of Miss Hill's readers, who had no acquaintance with her at

the time, wrote to her, and some weeks after went, at her suggestion, to see two friends, who promised to show her the working of the system as it has been started at Bristol. The person in question is accustomed to see facts and theories turning into print, but it was a newer experience to find print and theories starting back again into life; theories working in flesh and blood, sentiments changing into kind words and doings—vague “foster-parents” with eyes and noses, and “pauper children” becoming Lizzies and Katies, running across the garden. Parochial supervision is,—“Mr. Woods looked in—last Monday were it, Lizzie? He said he should be round again in a week; but he didn’t say nothing about schooling money.” 6s. 6d. a quarter for repair of clothes becomes in reality,—“It’s the boots, Miss. Why, Lizzie, she du wear them out in no time; this is her Sunday pinbefore. She sowed at it herself, but gels, why, they would like to be runnin’ in and out all day long.” This was from a funny, clever, goggle-eyed old lady called Mrs. Wallis, whom we drove to see, over a green round hill, beyond the Bristol streets.

Some streets in Bristol are not unlike the old Hogarth etching of outdoor life. They are wide, stone-paved, be-gabled, alive with busy people. The women wear flapping bonnets, drive their donkeys to market, carry their fish-baskets, and stride out freely as the figures do in the old-fashioned pictures.

We had left Bristol behind us and climbed another hill and turned into some by-lane again. The carriage rolled along between two rows of small tenements with front gardens, in which dogs and cats and children seemed growing and climbing everywhere. These latter were hanging to the rails, peeping over walls, straggling across the street. A carriage, a little baby in a blue hat, three ladies inside:—all this, no doubt, was a sight worth running for. I remember one little creature starting out into the middle of the road to look after us with two dark eyes. She had a little dark curly head, and a black frock, and one small black leg: the other foot was bare, and came patting fat and pink over the stones. As we drove away, she held up one little black stocking to us. There was also a pale curl-paper child, with horns sticking out all over its head, who came running to a garden gate at the end of the street. But curl-papers are not to be despised if my theory of life is a true one; and if facts gain in significance as they are the types and images of higher things, even curl-papers may be a distorted development of maternal affection.

Mrs. Wallis did not live in a street, but in a cottage, with a garden full of snapdragons. She was like an old woman in a fairy tale, living on the edge of a common, with her one little orphan-girl for her maid. She was sitting working at her door as we drove up, with aureoles of nice bright saucepans hanging up all round her head. The usual old man in the smock was sitting silent in a corner of the chimney; the little girl came and peeped at us and ran away tossing her hair. The old woman looked hard at my companion, suddenly brightened up and came out to meet us, with knobbly hand-shakes, and led the way out of the kitchen into the

state parlour. It was a homely, sunny little place ; the Dutch clock with the bunch of flowers painted on its nose was ticking in the corner ; an embroidered cat was hanging up, framed and glazed against the wall, faded, but grinning still at the opposite sampler, like the celebrated Cheshire cat in *Alice*. There was a lattice window with geraniums, an old oak chest of drawers, a round oil-cloth table with work and work-boxes piled upon it. The old lady smoothed her apron and made us sit down on her broad mahogany chairs. She was a clever-looking old woman, as I have said, with a frill cap and grey hair, and a hook nose and bright-blue goggle eyes. My friend went to the point at once.

"Here is a lady, Mrs. Wallis, who is interested in this plan of ours for boarding out the children, so I brought her to talk to you. How is Elizabeth, and how is she going on ?"

"You shall see her, Miss," the old lady said mysteriously ; "that was herr you see along o' uncle. She is getting on, thank you ; but dear me ! she is a deal of trouble at times" (confidentially).

"I am sorry to hear you say this, Mrs. Wallis," said her visitor.

"Thank ye, mum," said Mrs. Wallis, instantly mollified. "Gels they all du answer saree at times. Uncle, that were uncle in the kitchen, he can speak sharp too ; but I ses to 'Lizabeth (one finger up), 'When he speaks to you, don't you say nothin' at all.' Why, she oughter be a good gel when she is took and cared for" (many expressive nods and shakes). "I says to her, 'Lizabeth, who do you suppose would ha' took and cared for *me* if I hadn'a had a good father and mother when I was a little lass ?' She should remember such."

This impressive bit of morality being delivered, Mrs. Wallis calls Elizabeth, and the little girl instantly pops her head in at the door.

"Come in, Lizzie," says her protectress ; "the ladies would like to see you. You can show them your copy and your brother's letter. They teaches her at school," says Mrs. Harris, while Elizabeth is getting her copy-book out of a clean apron in the drawer ; "but, bless you, I have had to learn her everything about the house. My word, Miss, they teach them nothin' at that there Union. When she come to me" (impressively), "they had not so much as learnt her to peel a potato. If I sent her out when first she come, she wer' like a wild child. Now, 'Lizabeth, fetch your slate and your new pinbefore, and don't forget the letter."

Mrs. Harris nodded and winked delightedly as soon as ever the little girl's back was turned, and made many approving signs. She was evidently as proud as possible of her attainments, but anxious that Elizabeth herself should not suspect them.

Poor little pauper ! She was a dark-faced, half-wistful, half-tamed little creature, with a sullen look and then a bright one. The story of many a bygone trouble and dreary tramp was written in her face—the hardships and troubles of other lives than her own. She had thick black hair and stunted broad shoulders.

"Do you see any change in her since she came to you?" I asked once, when she was out of the room.

"Why, she have all wakened up like," said the old woman; "she du sing now o' mornings, and she begins to curl her hair. She's terrible fond o' children, too." Then turning to Miss —, "She took to Mrs. Parks' little gel from the first, Miss; that were a *dear* child, and I do feel amiss without her, that I do—on'y three year old, but such a good child: she were a darling little one. And Lizzie she du love children. I took her to a prayer-meeting out a-field the other day, and there she gits a baby in her lap, and nurses it a' the time. The people they laffed to see her" (some more expressive nods and winks at us. We are to show no admiration).

Mrs. Wallis was also evidently very much pleased with the brother's letter, which she read, holding it out at arms' length.

"It come last April," said she, "and we never thought as how he wanted us to write. Bristol—it be written from Bristol."—

"*MY DEAR SISTER*—I hope you are well" (said the brother), "and obedient to your mistress—for you should be always obedient" (says Mrs. Wallis at a venture)—"and you must remember that your mistress knows what you should do. You must be obedient and try to please your mistress. And I hope to hear you are a good and obedient child. So no more.

"Your affectionate brother,

"W.M. PHIPPS."

"So we understands her name is Phipps, not Fits," Mrs. Wallis prattled on. "They told us Fits at th' Union. Her brother he signs Phipps, Miss, as you see. Elizabeth, your name must be the same o' his."

"Can you write your name down on the slate, Elizabeth?" said Miss —.

Elizabeth set to work at railway pace, while Mrs. Wallis finished her little story.

How was it Elizabeth came to her? She felt lonesome, she said, after her first girl married, and she heard of this new plan, and thought as how she should like to take a little gel. "Tis a kindness," she said, "to take the children and larn them. Elizabeth she don't talk much about the Union; if she speaks saree, I say" (shakes of head and other reassuring signals to us), "'Elizabeth, I shall take you back.'"

Elizabeth grinned, not looking much alarmed, and showed all her white teeth: she had covered the slate with "Elizabeth Hipses" meanwhile.

Our visit was nearly at an end. Miss —'s little nephew was brought in from the carriage, where he had been winking his blue eyes and making believe to pull the reins all this time. Good old Mrs. Wallis brightened up brighter still to welcome the little blue and white visitor. Elizabeth looked pleased and shy: the baby was living in a world where there are no differences of estate as yet, and where the little pauper girl

coming up and clapping her hands before him, was as welcome a companion as a princess in her right.

I have described this little visit at length, because it seems to me a fair average example of the working of the system. My friends took me to see some more children before I left, and for another drive the next day through the green park that spreads for miles all round about the busy old city—bright commons, sheltering trees, valleys, and hills up which the horses climb. There should be a breed of winged griffins for the use of the inhabitants of Bristol. We stopped at a post-office by some cross-roads.

"This is not my district," my friend explained; "but I know that some children are boarded out somewhere near this, and I must find out here."

Then she came out again, and led the way by a narrow sort of back-passage place, with low thresholds and geraniums and children. We peeped into the open doors, and saw churns and pails and country appliances, and a man sitting like a pre-Raphaelite picture, adding up his books in an inner room. Then some one came to a doorway, and called to us to go on straight to the end house. This little *cul-de-sac* finished with a garden gate. There was a garden full of roses beyond it, and a stout elderly grey-headed woman watching us as we came up the alley. Was she Mrs. Bennet? No. Mrs. Bennet was her mother. Had they any little boarders? Yes; but they were at school. Then—for she was a friendly-minded woman—she gave a second glance at the party.

"Won't you walk in?" said she, and she flung wide open the little gate of the rose-garden. There were cabbages and vegetables, and all along the box-edged pathway were roses grafted, white and pink, upon their hawthorn stems. The white roses were specially sweet and beautiful. Out of the garden we stepped into the house, passing through the kitchen, where, as usual, the old man in the smock was sitting in the chimney-corner. Then we came into a little square dim parlour, with a window wide open on the garden. There was an old-fashioned couch pushed up to the window, and on the couch a woman was lying, looking up with a grave face. "This is my sister," said the other.

There was a certain likeness between them; but the education of pain and silent suffering had given a strange sweet look to the sick woman's face. Her voice, too, was very low and clear. I thought that they were happy little paupers who had found such a friend. The sick woman seemed to be their foster-parent from the way she spoke, although she often quoted "mother," and what mother said and did for them. Mother was ill upstairs, and the grey-headed sister must have had a handful, for the invalid could not move her limbs. She told us that the children were at school, but they would be home directly. It was some six months since they first came. They had thought they would as soon take two as one. They would be happier together, and mother had gone up to the Union to choose them; and one evening after dark Mr. Reynolds brought them down. Celia she was not frightened, but the little one cried bitterly, and so they

put them both to bed ; and then the next morning there was such a piece of fuss as never was when the time came for them to go to school. "But mother said, 'If we give in the first day, maybe we shall ne'er hear the end of it.' So to school they went, and there has never been a word since then. They are quite at home. Little Tilly has her sister up at Mrs. Johnson's. She do say she have five aunts, and an uncle, and a grandfather and grandmother. That is mother and father, you know," said the woman, gently smiling : "I heard her tell Mr. Johnson so t'other day, Mary" (to the sister). "Celia laughs, and says she ain't no relations, she was picked up in the street and taken to the Union—that old Union,' she calls it. It's nicer like for the little things to have some to go to, ma'am," the foster-aunt went on, appealing to Miss ——, "and they get better places afterwards. In th' Union they see the big girls coming in and out, and they do get set up to tricks. Now, Celia here can help my sister nicely—she scour and runs for errands. Little Celia had a big lump in her neck when first she came, and Little Tilly's ear were bad, and so was her arm, and Celia's too : 'twere in the blood, I think ; but they are doing nicely now. We give them nothing, only feed them like ourselves, and cold water to bathe. They be good children," said the aunt, smiling. "Little Tilly do have her tantrums ; then she is but a little maid."

Little Tilly and Celia came running home just then past the windows and the rose-trees. They had clean fresh faces and pinafores, and their aunts had made them some little hats, and tied up their hair. Tilly was a sweet-looking little girl of four, with great blue eyes. Little Celia was about eight, and she looked like the descendant of a hundred tramps. She had the same stunted grown look that had struck me in Elizabeth the day before, the narrow head and Chinese eyes ; her face seemed to tell the same piteous story of the past. But here she was fresh and clean and wholesome, and watched with kindly care ; her bad arm was healing, and her swollen glands were cured : she lived in this little rose-garden house, she went to school, she helped her "aunts," she played with Tilly, and she sewed. Celia's stitches were displayed all along Tilly's pinafore. Poor little stray waif of a vagrant race, apparently doomed to a like hopeless fate ; "found in the street," she had drifted into a tranquil and happy haven, among good people and peaceful things ; one could pray that such might be the fate of many and many another poor little victim. We bestowed the small benefaction of a threepenny-piece upon them (it was put into a special drawer for their benefit), as we said good-by. As we came away I looked back : the last sight I had was of the children standing by the sick woman's couch ; she had hold of Tilly's hand, and was looking into their faces with her kind eyes. It is not much to tell, but the sight touched me. After this we went to see two more little lilac pinafores boarding with the schoolmaster and his wife. They were about twelve and had just been christened Lucy and Nelly. The little pinafores dipped curtseys at every other word. Nelly was going into school, Lucy stopped at home on Fridays to help aunt ; they, too, had swollen glands (dip Lucy and Nelly), and the

schoolmaster asked Miss —— about sending Nelly to the doctor. Lucy was much better than when she came ; she helped "aunt" with the house and the baby (dip Lucy, and beam all over). Nelly was the little kitchen-maid (dip Nelly). "Lucy was a good useful little girl, but a terrible hand at breaking crockery" (here poor Lucy's face fell) ; "she had never been used to anything but wooden bowls at the Union."

"Lucy must learn," said kind Miss ——, "for the time when she goes into a place." Lucy here gave a melancholy and remorseful curtsey, so it seemed to me ; but she brightened up before we left.

Our last visit was to "Tilly's little sister, at Mrs. Johnson's." We came to an old-fashioned-looking house, with a straggling garden, and some one standing watching us as we drove up. The kitchen door was wide open, and we could see a deep high-roofed fireplace, a wooden dresser and tables, milk-bowls and jerkins, and great bunches of vegetables heaped up. It looked something like an old Dutch interior ; Mrs. Johnson, who stood in the doorway, had a striking dark-eyed face, with smooth black hair ; she was not unlike one of those solemn ladies that Vandyke has painted in frills and in black velvet and gold chains. She knew Miss ——, and welcomed her warmly. "She is very bad, Miss," she said ; "she is worse since you saw her last. Won't you come in ? Bessie will be glad to see you."

In a back parlour out of the old kitchen sat a little child humped up in a wooden chair, with two poor little swelled legs in white stockings, resting on a wooden stool. It was dressed with a pinafore. There it sat in the window, waiting placidly, with great eyes smouldering in its pale face, and with thick brown hair, brushed back. Every now and then it gave a little cough. It didn't speak, it only sat quite still, watching us. Two smart dolls were toppling unheeded against the window-sill, in pink and blue finery and feathers ; there was a box of toys half open.

"Are they good ?" said Miss ——, pointing to the dolls. Little Bessie did not answer ; she only looked a great wide far-away look. Mrs. Johnson answered, "I never hears them quarrel," she said, smiling, and looking back at the little girl. "That one you was kind eno' to send was to have been called Rose, and this one Rosyblue ; but poor Bessie she don't care for them now. She ha'f undressed Rosyblue the day before yesterday ; but she were not strong enough to dress her again. So there is the poor creature left standin' in het shimmy." Little Bessie still sat watchful and speechless while Mrs. Johnson sat down and went on with her little monologue. "Johnson he has to carry her upstairs at night ; we got her little bed on the floor in our room. She used to sleep down here, but, bless you, I was up and down ha'f the night. I've not had a right sleep for a week, and my back do ache holdin' her ; she do sleep so badly. It's 'O dear !' and 'O my !' and 'O how can I !' T'other morning she was still complainin' like, and I says, 'Bessie, that's the night's litan' ; and she left off directly. She is a good little girl, Bessie is. One day she got out into the passage, and we thought she

was going to be well ; but 'twas no use. I often says to her, 'Bessie, if ye should be dying, what should you like your little sister to have?' Bessie says she should like to go to heaven if Mrs. G—— is there. I asked her t'other day, if she should like to go back to the Union to be nursed ; but she don't want to go—do ye, Bessie ?" The child gave a faint smile, and shook her dark shaggy head. "The doctor says her heart and her liver and her stomach is all in bits," said Mrs. Johnson, half sadly, half proud of such an illness. "He didn't mention her lungs, but no doubt they'll go too."

Johnson had walked I don't know how many miles to get a doctor for the "poor little maid;" all the strawberries in the garden were for her ; all the best they had to give—their night's rest, their kind hearts' overflow. I don't think there is any comment needed to the little story. Mrs. Johnson followed us out to say the doctor, when he came last, had told them they must not hope to save the child. If she had been their very own they could not have been more tender.

What does it mean ? Does it mean that the world is a happier, kinder, better world than we have been brought up to acknowledge ? I have just heard some one say that perfection does exist in this life, though we are timid to believe it. Is this true ? The elements are to be found scattered everywhere. To each one of us the harmonies which might be are so near at times ; the possibilities of happiness, the wild possibilities of perfection, so deep stirring in our hearts that we cannot help believing in them, even though we put out our hands again and again only to grasp whole dust-heaps of disappointment, of ashes, and dead leaves, and broken straws ; and if we start from our fancies with a thrill of keen regret, the very pain with which we realize that they were but dreams, not realities, seems to speak to us of the truth of some actual realization somewhere else, some other day, for others, perhaps, if not for ourselves. Is it better to let the fancy go ? It would be worse a thousand thousand times if it had not come. Rainbows, and bubbles, and dreams are realities if they make the flashes that brighten the twilight of life. They may be but reflections, but they may also be radiations from the great Light of a clearer truth.

At all events, it is no dream that there are children dying and utterly wrecked for want of homes, homes sad for want of children ; that there are kind souls ready, out of the abundance of their hearts, to pour out upon others the love that is but a pain and a regret when it is constrained within bonds that it longs to burst. Of all the well-meant failures of life, the busy about nothingnesses, the honest endeavours after confusion and ill-success, it is not necessary to speak. We have had most of us to acknowledge our mistakes again and again ; but even in the midst of it all, here and there comes a success and a more complete achievement. Of course this may not always be the case : now and then the most careful plan may fail from one reason or another. The visitor may be deceived, the homes ill-chosen : the boarding-out system cannot pretend to infallibility,

any more than any other of the makeshifts of life; but it is out of doors and open to daily inspection, and not enclosed within four walls: it has nature and human sympathy upon its side; and it seems to the writer one of those endeavours of which their good sense and simplicity are the best recommendations.

I will conclude by quoting the following extract from Colonel E. S. Grant's *Practical Guide*. Colonel Grant says: "The rules on this subject, submitted by Mr. Henley in his report on the boarding-out system in Scotland, are so sensible, and so similar in almost every respect to those already adopted in the Bath Union, that they are given here *in extenso*:"—

The following classes should under no circumstances be boarded out:—

- (a.) Illegitimate children of widows still living.
- (b.) Other illegitimate children whose mothers are living.
- (c.) Children deserted by one parent.

(d.) Children whose parents are living.—*Note.* These classes are not excluded in Scotland, but are so in England by the present Poor Law regulations. How far some of them might be modified is deserving of consideration.

2. Deserted children should not be boarded-out till they have been for some time in the workhouse.

3. Children should not usually be boarded with relations.—*Note.* In some English unions this is extensively practised; but although, as a general practice, it is believed to give rise to imposition and other evils, there are cases in which it seems very desirable.

No child should be boarded with a person who is, or otherwise would be, in receipt of parochial relief.—*Note.* This has been done in some cases, and with apparent good results.

5. A child, before it is boarded-out, should be passed by the medical officer, and a certificate given that it is in a proper state, mentally and bodily, to be sent out.—*Note.* This is a most necessary rule, as otherwise cutaneous and other diseases might be carried into and spread in villages; and any physical defect, such as the loss of one eye, partial deafness, or any deformity, should be noticed in the certificate.

6. Not more than two children, except in the case of a family, should be sent to one house.—*Note.* This should depend upon whether the foster-parents have any children of their own, and upon the amount of accommodation, as three children can be well cared for in one family.

7. Brothers and sisters should usually be kept together.

8. The sexes should, as far as possible, be separated in the sleeping-rooms.

9. Children over seven years of age should not sleep in the same room with married people.

10. Children should be boarded-out as young as possible.—*Note.* And may be kept until they are eligible to be placed out in service, which in some unions is considered to be the case at the age of thirteen; but at the district school at Hanwell no girl is sent out to service until she is fourteen, and the writer thinks there are obvious reasons for extending it to this later age for the case of girls.

11. Children should be removed—1st. If they are kept away from school, Sunday-school, or place of worship; 2nd. If lodgers are put in the same room with the children; 3rd. If children are taken into board from other unions or parishes; 4th. Or from private people.—*Note.* The 2nd rule regarding lodgers is particularly necessary to be observed, especially where there are girls.

